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WE OF ITALY

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ONE OF THE WRITERS

From a drawing by C. Coppède

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Parker

WE OF ITALY

BY

KLYDA RICHARDSON STEEGE

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TO THE BRAVE DEFENDERS OF ITALY ON LAND OR SEA;
TO THE SOLDIERS AND SAILORS WHO ARE OFFERING THEIR LIVES
AND THEIR ALL;
TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN,
AND TO THE CONQUERORS WHO ARE TO COME
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

"Therefore let us all
Refreshed in England or in other land
By visions, with their fountain-rise and fall,
Of this earth's darling,—we who understand
A little how the Tuscan musical
Vowels do round themselves as if they planned
Eternities of separate sweetness,—we
Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-book,
Or ere in wine-cup we pledged faith or glee,—
Who loved Rome's wolf, with demi-gods at suck,
Or ere we loved truth's own divinity,—
Who loved, in brief, the classic hill and brook,
And Ovid's dreaming tales, and Petrarch's song,
Or ere we loved Love's self even!—let us give
The blessing of our souls (and wish them strong
To bear it to the height where prayers arrive,
When faithful spirits pray against a wrong)
To this great cause of Southern men, who strive
In God's name for man's rights, and shall not fail."

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

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K. R. STEEGE.

SIENA, ITALY, *May* 1917.

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INTRODUCTION

"Fate largo! Che passa l'Italia"

1915,—and May in Italy. The glory of coming summer everywhere, multitudes of flowers and the scents of them, nights of beauty and the song of the nightingale. Every May brings these delights. A time to dream and exult in,—for high hopes and wrongs forgotten and sorrows past.

Ah, but not this May! What heavy shadows were resting on the world, what outrages and crimes were being committed. The cries from the battle-fields of Europe, the groans of the wounded and dying, the weeping of the homeless and the oppressed were ascending into the sweet spring air and drowning songs of mirth and sounds of joy.

Beyond the snow-crowned Alps, calm in their eternal silence, raged the war. Across the Adriatic waters, the enemy, the ancient enemy of Italy, was persecuting and destroying, and on all the surrounding seas death and destruction waited and lurked, while over defenceless cities danger threatened from the very skies themselves.

From the *terre irredente*, the "unredeemed countries" of Italian-speaking people, the people for long oppressed by the stranger's cruel yoke,—they were holding out hands for help, and calling

from the Alpine valleys and over the blue sea to the old Mother, Italy.

"Give us back to our own," they were crying, "our rightful citizenship, our own laws, our customs, and our language. Deliver us from the rule of the Hapsburgs and from the Austrian tyranny. We were of Italy; oh, take us back, our brothers!"

And to all these voices was Italy indifferent? Had the cries of pain not reached her? Ah, no, she had felt them all in her heart of hearts, and how was her peace troubled by them!

When the hosts of the northern barbarians invaded the quiet and took away the liberty and joy of peaceful, beautiful, brave little Belgium, laying waste her cities,—and the smiling villages and fields of fair France,—when the heroes of English blood (old friends and true of Italy) came to the rescue and threw themselves into the strife, giving their lives and all to protect and avenge the suffering and to drive back the arrogant cruelty and wickedness arrayed against civilisation and humanity,—when the might of Russia was aroused to defend and support the people of their own blood,—could Italy stand by, then, and not offer to strike a blow in such noble conflict?

Heart and soul she was with those who were enduring bitter wrong and terrible grief and pain. Her own history, from Roman days down, had been nothing more than a series of struggles against oppression and foreign invasion. She, too, from earliest times had been spoiled and ravished by rulers and tyrants from other countries whose

thoughts were all of greed and cruelty. Through years she had fought her way to independence, and great was the price she had paid. The blood of patriots and martyrs had soaked her soil and reddened the roads over which at last Rome was entered and made the capital of a united country, "this young, free land of Italy."

Yet when in August 1914 the flood of war was loosed over the greater part of the European Continent, Italy was not free, not free to act as many of her people could have wished, but fettered in many ways, hindered in many directions and, at that moment, quite unable and unprepared to leave her neutrality.

. . . .

For years Germany and Austria had been binding chains about Italy and the Italians which were much stronger than the people themselves realised. After her many wars and losses as she struggled to light and independence, Italy was poor. She was an agricultural country primarily, and not accustomed to industries and great commercial enterprises, though long ago her Lombards and Florentines had been great merchants and bankers. But that was in a far-away time and money was far from plenty in the land so rich in memories and so royal in art.

"For Italy's the whole earth's treasury."

For many, many years, and especially since travelling became easy, the Germans have made Italy their playground. Glad to escape their long cold winters, their dreary, sunless days, eager for warmer airs and bluer skies, the northern peoples

have invaded the Italian cities and thronged the Mediterranean shores. The land "*wo die Citronen blühen*" has enticed them all, their sentimentality has overflowed in raptures over every beauty of Nature and of Art. Great scholars, fine critics, and careful students many of them may have been, but how many annoyances and disturbances they have brought in their train! They have brought much money into the country, these sentimental travellers, but they have expected full value for it. We have had to put up with their rudeness and bad manners and aggressiveness, and to listen to their noisy speech in many a beautiful and hallowed spot where silence was the best appreciation. Their "*Wunderbar!*" "*Furchtbar schön!*" resounded wherever one might flee for peace and quiet enjoyment.

The careful and methodical planning of Germany had brought her into the closest sort of business relations with Italy. Who built and owned most of the hotels in all beautiful and picturesque places, hotels manned by German and Austrian staffs? Who lent money to banks and started one commercial enterprise after another? Who opened her markets to receive Italy's importations of fruits and flowers and wine and oil? But who overloaded Italian shops with her products, and with cleverly made imitations of articles which had helped to support honest, hardworking Italians, drove many of Italy's patient artisans to idleness? German things were cheaper, therefore they found a better market. Germany was at the back of almost every enter-

prise in the country, and was by slow degrees buying Italy and getting her into her power.

It may have seemed a good thing, this new current of commercial prosperity, which ran through the majority of undertakings in a business way, but underneath the surface there ran along below this same current, ideas of self-seeking and personal aggrandizement, anchored deeply in the German mind. What nation so ambitious as they, and what Emperor was so mad for conquest as theirs!

It would have been more than convenient for Austria or Germany to have had a port or so on the Mediterranean, and a firm foothold in the south. Therefore, up at Berlin and off in Vienna, wise counsellors considered the situation. The power of the northern people must be strengthened in Italy, part must be taken in all her industries, and money must flow freely through the country, money from German sources. All Italy's defences and weak points must be known. Some day that knowledge will be convenient.

"And so," said the Central Powers, "Italy will forget all her old grudges against Austria, and will grant us anything we like to ask if only we pay her well and are kind and good to her. And besides she is bound to us by the terms of that famous Triple Alliance, and we are her dear friends and allies." Yet it seemed a good thing to Austria that through all these years since Italy settled into apparent peace with her, she should go on making her defences strong to the north of the frontier, and keeping guard and watching, watching always.

However, in spite of the apparently friendly and cordial relations between Italy and her northern neighbours, there were frequent murmurs of discontent to be heard. "Must we be stepped upon and ordered about by Germany just because she has put so much money into our country? Surely we could manage our own affairs without her interference? She is getting too much control over our affairs. And have we forgotten Austria's past cruelty and treachery? Would she not be overjoyed to take back Venice and Lombardy if she could and overrun the land for which our fathers died, as she did before? The children and grandchildren of the patriots of the *Risorgimento* do not trust the old foe, nor believe that he has become a friend."

But Germany and Austria thought with their usual and amazing conceit that they understood the Italians, and when in August 1914 it was discovered that Italy had no idea of entering into war by their side against countries to which she was a friend and who had been friends to her there was an outburst of indignation in the camps of the Huns. And when Austria asked that her troops might cross over Italian territory, south of Switzerland, in order to attack the French frontier, she was surprised to receive a most decided "No!"

So at that time the matter rested, to all appearances, and Italy passed for what she never was, a neutral country. All the patriot blood in her boiled with rage and longing as she looked on and saw the horrors being enacted on the battle-fields

and in peaceful towns and on the seas. A stir of preparation went through the land, not only in councils and Parliament and among the high commanders of the army and navy, but everywhere. The people were getting ready to avenge their own cause and that of their brethren who had been undergoing persecutions and even martyrdoms ever since the day that Austria declared war on Servia, and even long before that. The country was strengthening itself for the great struggle.

The Tripoli war had somewhat weakened her, and the nation was tired, but she rapidly recovered herself, and by brave efforts, taxing all her resources, she increased her army and navy and looked to her defences. She began to find out how many spies in German employ were scattered here and there within her boundaries, and to discover the long-laid plots nearly ready to be carried out against her safety. The old cry, "*Fuori stranieri*," began to be heard. Many familiar faces were seen no more, business houses under German management were asked to close, and the German tourist with his ecstasies over things Italian stopped coming. Persons of Teutonic extraction, many of them residents of long standing, were obliged to leave in short order and seek more congenial countries.

Italy's case before the tribunal of history is plainly stated in her official declaration in which it is asserted that—

"by refusing to accept the pardonable reply of Serbia

which gave to the above-named Powers all the satisfaction which they could reasonably ask, refusing to listen to the conciliatory proposals which Italy presented together with the other Powers, in the intent to preserve Europe from ruthless strife, which would be certain to shed blood and work ruin to an extent never before imagined, Austria-Hungary broke with her own hands the Treaty of Alliance with Italy, which treaty, as loyally interpreted, was not an instrument of aggression, but only a means of defence against possible attacks from others, and was intended to contribute towards the elimination or the pacifying of any causes for war, and to assure to the respective peoples for many years the inestimable benefits of peace.

"Austria-Hungary sent her Note to Serbia without previous agreement with Italy. In so doing she indisputably violated in one of its fundamental clauses the Treaty of Alliance.

"It was illegal for Austria to think that Italy could remain indifferent to the destruction of Serbian independence. . . . For a long time Italy had frequently declared in friendly but explicit terms that the independence of Serbia was considered by Italy as the essential element in the equilibrium of the Balkans, and that Italy herself would never permit that she should be disturbed to her own hurt.

"Austria, therefore, in attacking Serbia by an unforeseen ultimatum, disdaining all advice, by diplomatic movement against us, with jealous care keeping her plans secret from Italy—who received the news, together with the public, through the telegraphic agencies instead of through the regular channels—placed herself not only outside the Alliance with Italy but raised herself up as an enemy against Italian interests."

Thus wrote the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs in a circular to the representatives of the Powers abroad on the outbreak of the Italian war. He mentions the various attempts which had been made during the winter of 1914–15 and the following spring to come to some satisfactory arrangements with Austria, especially in regard to the territory under Austrian rule inhabited by people of Italian language and race. None of these negotiations came to any settlement, and Austria, on the other hand, showed more and more openly her disrespect and hatred for Italy and her people. And so continues the Minister:

"In these conditions Italy found herself confronted by the danger that every traditional aspiration of hers for nationality, and every desire for security in the Adriatic, would be lost forever; while at the same time other contingencies of the European conflict threatened her greater interests in other seas. From these causes arose the necessity for and the duty of Italy to take back the liberty of action to which she was entitled, and to endeavour to protect her own interests, without waiting for negotiations conducted uselessly for months, and outside of that Alliance with Austria-Hungary which virtually ceased in July 1914.

"The constant policy of the Imperial and Royal Government in regard to the subject Italian population was not entirely based on internal reasons, or concerned with the questions between the different nationalities disputing in the Monarchy. She appeared, on the contrary, to be inspired principally by sentiments of hostility and of aversion towards Italy, feelings which dominated

persons high in power, and had a determining influence on their decisions.

"Among the many indications of this state of feeling may be cited the fact that in 1911, while Italy was engaged in the war against Turkey, the general staff at Vienna made active preparations against us, and the progressive military party made an active campaign to drag in the other responsible factors of the Monarchy with them.

"At the same time the arming of our frontier was assuming a most decidedly offensive appearance . . . and since the time above-mentioned, in 1911, we were always expecting a sudden armed menace against us, if the party hostile to us should come into power at Vienna."

"All this was known to Italy . . . but a sincere desire for peace, if it were possible, prevailed among the Italian people." All efforts towards proper and reasonable settlement of the difficulties between the two countries proving to be finally in vain, "the Ambassador at Vienna was ordered to declare to the Austria-Hungarian Government that the Italian Government was released from every tie depending on the Treaty of the Triple Alliance as far as Austria-Hungary was concerned."

This communication was made at Vienna on May 4th, 1915, and on the 24th of May war was declared.

There are many elements in Italy, and there were enemies to her peace within her gates who were not of stranger race. Some of these were self-seekers, and cared only for present comfort

and safety, and they intrigued with the enemy and tried to stir up popular sentiment against the just cause which was forcing Italy into war. In those last days before war was actually declared, these bad elements came to the top and there were not wanting coward hearts and seditious speech. It needed wise guiding of the excitable Italian people in those tumultuous days. But patriotism triumphed and a mighty wave of enthusiasm and excitement swept over the land.

1915,—and May in Italy. All the cities have made themselves gay with banners. Throngs march singing and cheering through the streets. Flowers are thrown from balconies. Every one wears the red, white, and green in ribbons and badges and blossoms. Processions form everywhere, and shouts fill the air: "*Viva l'Italia!*" "*Viva la guerra!*" "*Viva il Re!*"

The mothers and the wives may weep but they are brave. The fathers look with pride upon their sons, and the old men see again in the young recruits their own youth and have visions of their great leaders, of Garibaldi and their first soldier-king. And the soldiers themselves go forth without a tear and filled with a pride so great that it cannot be contained. Singing and joyful and hopeful they go, and the blessings and prayers of a people are behind them.

They are all ready, all Italy,—the fiery Sicilians and strong Sardinians, the determined, intelligent Lombards, the Venetians with old hatreds stirring in their hearts, the men from the Campagna and the mountains of the Abruzzi, from Naples with

their memories of old oppressions and wrongs to avenge, the Romans proud of their traditions of victory, the Genoese and the other people of Liguria with a firm ambition to preserve their coast from the invader, the people of the Adriatic shore who look over to where their suffering brothers call across the sea, the Tuscans from peaceful farms and prosperous cities, and the quiet Umbrians. All Italy! All united as never before, eager and impatient to come to the side of the Allied Powers in the conflict for liberty and humanity, and to rescue their own people from long-endured foreign bondage.

"Make room! Italy passes!"

. . . .

The joy and exultation with which the young men of Italy answered the call to arms can scarcely be imagined. With what enthusiasm they departed! Even in cases where the mothers and families shrank from the sacrifice of letting them go their objections were in vain, for go they would though there might be tears behind them. And many and many a father and mother dried their tears and spoke bravely and sent their sons away with a smile.

The spirit of the soldiers is expressed so perfectly in the letters sent home that reading them one can understand their feelings, sympathise with their excitement, and realise their love for the family. One knows how proud the fathers and mothers and sweethearts and wives are as they read the lines written often in circumstances of difficulty and in the midst of danger. They are often

scribbled in pencil on stray bits of paper, with the knapsack for a table, in the pause between firing, from the trenches or cold mountain peaks.

Some are written for the brave boys, wounded and in hospital, dictated to some kind nurse, and many of them have reached the family when their writers are lying cold and still on the mountain side. And some of these letters tell of great battles and their own successes, experiences, and hopes.

Every one of them, however, whether from the hand of a peasant whose spelling and handwriting need an interpreter, or from the student or man of culture, bears its unfailing message of love and remembrance and breathes a spirit of patriotism.

This is therefore a glimpse of the war which Italy is carrying on seen from the inside: not the work of military critics nor of learned and experienced historians, but the simple chronicle of every day as the soldier sees it in trench, on bivouac, on the march, or face to face with death; or as the sailor looking out over wide seas, where dangers hide and the enemy waits; when the moments are precious, and there is barely time for the few hastily written words of farewell and courage.

The letters, then, and the brief accounts of episodes of bravery and daring, tell their own story, and need little explanation. In them the heart of Italy finds voice.

WE OF ITALY

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY DAYS

We are at the beginning of the war: the last days of May 1915, and the letters begin to come in. They are all full of encouragement and cheer. Here are a few of them:—

"*May 27th*, 1915.

"My dearest Ones,—Yesterday, I received your affectionate letter, and I must thank you all for having given me a moment of amusement by your fears. Are we still in the Middle Ages that you should think of such things? There may be some very bad people among the enemy, but not so bad as to act in the way you suggest. To make prisoners die of hunger seems to me such an unheard-of thing that I can scarcely imagine it. Be assured, however, that there is no danger that we shall have to prove the truth of such a story by falling into the hands of the Austrians as prisoners. We have begun now to give it to them. Our masked batteries are coming down hard on the forts and on the armoured cupolas of the enemy, and some of these are already ruined and put out of action. In a few days we hope to make an end by undermining them all, and so every danger will be passed. Believe me that amongst us there reigns the greatest gaiety. No one

is afraid, no one is timid, we are all doing our duty with conscientiousness and with light hearts, and so we pass the days more than content. You cannot imagine what a shout of joy bursts forth from our men when we see from our observatory the blowing up of some cupola, and when some well-aimed shot falls on the enemy's fort. Not a single shot has reached our batteries. Only yesterday morning four or five shrapnel shells fell some three or four hundred metres beyond our batteries. Of the five forts along the frontier which it is our business to destroy, only three are making a partial resistance. The other two, the most important, are already dismantled and have ceased firing. . . .

"Many kisses and greetings to my brothers and my sister . . . and to Mamma and to *Babbo* whom I so much adore.—Your most affectionate son."

. . . .

"In the most precious and beautiful hour of my life, in the most sublime moment of the strength of my youth in which with all the ardour of a determined soul, I owed it to you, and I longed to offer myself to you, to all the family, to repay you for all the sacrifices you have made for me, the Country, our beautiful Italy, calls me to defend her!

"I pray you, oh dear loved ones, with all the strength which my love as a good, true, and respectful son imposes upon me, that you will be calm and serene. Do not be too much alarmed, but pray—pray the good God that he will bring me back soon to your holy affection—and bring me back full of glory! The important thing is to act so that Papa and Mamma will not grieve too much. We must give them an example of serenity.

"I am leaving—my mind is calm. I go with the firm

conviction of a complete victory and of a happy and glorious return. . . . My only grief, my deep suffering, is for the distress which I give to you. If God will protect me and listen to my prayers, I shall be proud and glad one day that I offered my arm and exposed my life for a holy cause, for the greatness and for the name of our Italy! And you also will be happy! Thou, adored Mamma, because thy son covered with glory shall come back to thee; and thou, my Father, because I shall bring honour to thy name, and increase its lustre and show homage to thy uniform. Oh beloved parents, I implore you to have resignation."

. . . .

The next letter is from a labourer who had already seen service for twenty months in Africa. He is a little sad at leaving his work and the family from whom he had been so long separated, but he says courageously:—

"The hour is now come. May we be worthy and brave to rescue those smiling provinces which for years have been under the yoke of that vile power which calls itself Austria, which has always treated us like barbarians and not like Italians. Dear Mamma, I promise you that if I have the honour to fight those wild beasts, who have always hated Italy, I too will show them, as did our fathers, what Italian blood is."

. . . .

Here is a fragment from a letter written to his mother by a young lawyer of Pescara:—

"At three-forty of the afternoon of the 28th of May, we passed the confines amidst the enthusiasm of the soldiers. The people all speak our sweet language, but

there are only women, old men, and children here, and there is such a scarcity of food as to be alarming. However, by good luck, the autocars are coming behind us, loaded with all the good things of God, and we shall distribute them."

. . . .

A priest who ministers in a little village of southern Italy writes begging that some kind of place may be found for him, "because he wishes to be of use to the *Patria*." And he continues: "The affection for my dear old parents and the tenderness which I feel for my little nephews will not hold me back in any way. The greatness of the *Patria* is the highest of all my ideals. If all Italians had such feelings as I have in their breasts, we should take not only Trent and Trieste but half the world.—*May 27th*, 1915."

A letter published in the *Giornale d'Italia* :—

"SPEZIA, 25 *May*, 1915.

"SIGNOR DIRETTORE,—At this moment I am recalled to the service of our glorious Navy, and however, in my mistaken past, I have been against the war, to-day I am happy,—proud of my change of conscience, and I feel highly honoured to be allowed to give my arm to our *Patria*, for the redemption of our third Italy.

"The enthusiasm among the men who have been recalled is admirable, grand, and sublime, eminently fine in these fathers of families who think of nothing besides being speedily embarked in our glorious squadron.

"From this moment begins for me a new life, and I feel superbly proud to transmit by means of your patriotic

columns my resignation from the Socialist Party and from the syndicate of the Italian railroad men.

"From this moment I can think of nothing but how to be of use to the *Patria* and to the King. The beautiful uniform of the sailor, which I have put on again to-day after seven long years, has awakened sentiments in me of other times, and I feel myself to be another man. My heart is strong, and through your columns I send good wishes for the victory of our Army and Navy.

"I hope that my poor words may be an incitement to the few dissenters in this hour of glory, this hour of the redemption of our unredeemed territories.

"I salute all the fervent patriots, my dear children and my Cristina. *Viva l'Italia! Viva l'Esercito! Viva la nostra Marina!*

"Yours for life and for the *Patria*,

"GIUSEPPE NOB. SANCINI,
"Corpo Reali Equipaggi, Spezia."

. . . .

The first shot of the war:—

"The first place beyond the frontier to fall into Italian hands was Cormons, and the first shot was fired by the *guardia di finanza* Dell'Acqua. It was about half-past two in the night, when he was aware in the darkness of a still darker object which was cautiously approaching the bridge over the Judrio and bending down in a suspicious attitude. Dell'Acqua fired at the unknown person and killed him. It was an Austrian about to set fire to a mine to blow up the bridge.

"As the morning dawned behind the hills, the regular firing began: one heard the cannon, a few at first and then more and more. . . . And immediately afterwards, with

a magnificent impetus, the troops came on, from this side and from that, fording the Judrio, passing over the bridges, climbing up vertical slopes. They appeared and disappeared. And the wind brought still to listening ears sounds of distant thunder of cannon, of the constant cracking of musket shots, short, dry, and insistent.

"The Italians entered the town of Cormons early in the morning, and the last of the Austrians went out, taking with them whatever they could, and going northward. The tricolour was raised over the Town Hall and the soldiers gathered around and cheered.

"Before the Austrians left they had spread the most alarming tales about. They said that the Italians would sack everything, and burn whatever they did not want, and that the women would be treated in the most horrible manner. Consequently the poor people of Cormons were afraid at first to open their doors and come out. But when the first patrol passed into the town, to be followed by the artillery and then the infantry, the population saw that the soldiers were courteous and kind, and respectful to the persons and property of all—then little by little, one after another, the doors began to open.

"A merchant who sold stuffs of various kinds, who had some pieces of red and white woollen material in his shop and—as it happened—a little green at his house, improvised an Italian flag. And soon afterwards the tricolour was flying in various directions. The women came around the soldiers offering them drinks and postcards, and showing them every attention. And thus the Italian campaign began."

. . . .

What patriotic sacrifice is shown by this peasant:—

"During the requisition of animals at Campobasso, a little village in the mountains, a very good horse was found, the property of a poor *contadino*. On being offered six hundred *lire* in compensation for the loss of his beast, he repeatedly and energetically refused to accept that sum, and not for the reason that he thought the amount too small. On the other hand, he said:

"'I have nothing to offer, I have only this horse, and I give him willingly without any pay to the Government of the King.'"

. . . .

Up at the north they are good patriots, in the Cadore where the fighting has since been so fierce, and where the Italians have made many conquests. The priests of that region have shown themselves especially loyal, in an army where there are so many chaplains who are also good fighters.

At the outbreak of the war many of these priests were glad. Under their altars had been kept hidden away the old Venetian banners and the tricolour which had waved against the Germans four centuries and a half ago. Good priests, brave Italians!

"*May* 1915.

"Only the other day, here at Belluno, a priest presented himself to be enrolled. He was the parish priest of Castion, a village a short distance away: a big, strong young man, capable of killing five Austrians at a blow. He said:

"'I have come to enlist as a volunteer in the Alpini; but before I sign I wish to make a condition. It is this: if within twenty-four hours you send me to the firing line, good; behold me ready. If not, I shall have nothing

more to do with you. See, here is my passport all in order: and I am leaving. I shall go over into France, and fight against the Germans from that side.' "

. . . .

One of the first places which the Italians occupied in the first victorious days was Grado, which is almost directly across the Adriatic from Trieste. The following letter was written on May 30, 1915. How hard it was that those hopes which were so great at that moment could not be realised, though now the consummation seems near. If it had not been for treachery during those first six months, the war with the Austrians might have been almost over on the part of Italy before now.

This letter was sent to the Director of the *Giornale d'Italia* :—

" SIGNOR DIRETTORE,—Two lines only to say that *to-day* —since the Adriatic is calm—*from Trieste*, even with a modest spyglass, *one can see the tricolour which is waving over Grado!* That tells us that the Italian soldiers are in sight of Trieste! We can see from Trieste the little white group of the houses of Grado, especially from high parts of the city, with the naked eye, even if the horizon is not perfectly clear. Therefore the news of the taking of Grado will certainly have reached Trieste and the other localities of the Istrian coast, from which Grado can be seen, and I think with emotion of the joy which must be in the hearts of our brothers who are waiting in the lands which are to be redeemed. How many glasses will to-day be secretly turned towards Grado from the hills of Trieste, from S. Giusto, S. Vito . . . and from the houses along the shore!

"Signor Direttore, give the news to the Romans, the divine news, the news which seems a dream:—the Italian soldiers are in sight of Trieste. And not only those of Grado, but also those of Aquileia and those who have arrived at the mouth of the Isonzo, towards Sdobba.

"With grateful affection and respect.—Yours, ATTILIO TAMARO."

Among the first of the brave officers to fall in the early days of battle was the often-mentioned lieutenant-colonel, Michele Pericle Negrotto, who left behind him several memorable letters. One of these, written to his sister and her husband a few days before war was declared, is worth reading as among the last expressions of a noble and high-minded character:—

"S. PIETRO AL NATISONE (UDINE),
"*May* 10*th*, 1915.

"I thank you profoundly for the kind and affectionate wishes which you send me. . . .

"You as well as I know that each one must meet his own fate in this world. The hour strikes as it has been decreed. If my hour has not yet sounded, then even from the war I shall come forth unharmed. In any case, one thing is sure: that I will do my duty everywhere and always, even to the end. I am proud to be an Italian and especially to be a Bersagliere, and I shall know how to do honour to my nation and to the glorious corps to which I belong. . . .

"You know how I have dreamed of this war of liberation, which will make Italy a greater and a more united nation: how for years I have encouraged such a war, and

urged it by means of the press. Imagine then with what enthusiasm I shall fight, having the good fortune to be among the first to go, and so to be sent into one of the advanced positions.

"If I come out safe and sound from the tremendous conflict I hope to engage in another kind of war, not of blood but of ideals: an ardent struggle for the material and moral uplifting of our country, for its firm fusion and national cohesion against all political abuses and party intrigues, great and small: intrigues which, bound by their own interests and narrow hatreds, tend to overthrow great ideas, undermining our unity of thought and action, and placing the brilliant Latin civilisation in danger from barbaric but disciplined German culture.

"May you keep well. I embrace you with great affection, and I send kisses to my nephews."

. . . .

Before Colonel Negrotto went into the engagement which was his last, he sent the following letter to a friend in Milan, with directions that in the event of his death in the battle it should be delivered to his little son, Enzo:—

"To Thee, Enzo, my Son,—In the moment of leaving life forever, this is the heritage which thy Papa leaves to thee. Be thou obedient and respectful to thy Mother. Now that she will be alone in the world, faithful always to the name and memory of thy father, she should find her consolation and her firm and safe support in thee, our dearest son.

"Be thou always and everywhere honest, industrious, and brave. Be proud of the name Italian and so conduct thyself in every way that thy actions may serve to add to

the glory and the power of our nation, and to honour the unstained name which I leave thee as an inheritance.

"Many, many kisses from thy Papa, who has always loved thee dearly."

. . . .

The following inspiring words are taken from a discourse given by Don Donatelli, military chaplain of a division of cavalry, composed for the greater part of Lombards, on the first occasion of celebrating the Mass at the front:—

"*June* 1915.

"Officers and soldiers!—

"I feel profoundly moved at this moment, when I have for the first time in my life celebrated the Divine Sacrifice of the Holy Mass at this little field altar: and I am very glad, thanks to the kind permission of my superiors, to add a few words on faith and Christian strength.

"Here, where the land marked the extreme limits of our *Patria*, here where the echo brings the uneasy roar of the cannon which accompanies our march of triumph, it is beautiful and divine to lift up our mind and our heart to God, asking that he will favour the work which we have well begun. The poet says:

'. . . *fuga di tempi e barbari silenzi*
vince e dal flutto delle cose emerge
sola di luce ai secoli affluenti
faro l'idea.' . . .

". . . But we also have one idea; that which to-day unites all hearts and all hopes; which draws us together under the banner of our beloved Italy for the triumph of her rights, of her civilisation, and of her greatness. For this

great and sweet idea our parents, the fathers, the mothers, the wives, the sons, the sisters have for us to-day, from the hundred cities of Italy to the last village, a growing and silently enthusiastic admiration. For this pure and sacred flame from one end to the other of our peninsula blooms miraculously the flower of sacrifice, straight on its stalk, under the shadow of tempest; for this high sentiment our battalions, not unworthy of the conquering legions of Rome, cross the boundary to-day with the fateful cry of '*Savoia!*' Oh, happy those who in this magnificent age, in which Italy sings 'with the round mouth of cannon,' shall write a refulgent page of story! To-day the *Patria* wants the testimony of blood; and so from the first soldier to the last she expects the grand sacrifice.

"Before this altar upon which was offered the prayer to the Son of Man, to Him who died for all humanity but with the one country in His heart, we remember as brothers all those who have bravely fallen. Let us give a thought to the heroes of the Independence who first marked out the way of our redemption: to the brave sons of the army and navy who in Asia and in the Dark Continent made beautiful the tricolour and great the name of Italy, especially there where the Italian mothers go even to-day with remembrance but with dry eyes, to gather the petals of Italian flowers which a traitor wind of the desert once scattered on the African sands: let us turn our gaze confidently and serenely to the first of the dead on this land of our fathers restored to liberty; and in the face of such examples and such glory let us repeat the cry of the brave—We follow you!

"May the Lord bless our August Sovereigns, their Majesties, the King and the Queen; bless the brave leaders of the army, the officers all, and the soldiers of the army

and the navy; bless in a special manner this division of which we are proud to form a part, and grant by Thy mercy that from the shining steel of the bayonet, the lance and the cannon shall soon sound together for our Italy the hymn of peace and the song of victory."

. . . .

To show how Italians of all beliefs and creeds were alike in their sentiments on the outbreak of the war, the following beautiful prayer for the success of the Italian arms is quoted. It was composed by Doctor Giuseppe Levi, the Chief Rabbi of the Synagogue at Casale Monferrato:—

"Our God is the God of victory.

"God great and omnipotent, God of pity and of justice! Hearken, we pray, with mercy to the prayer which we raise to Thee! Thou who from Thy throne lookest down to judge the world and the people with equity, Thou who hast always loved justice and hated arrogance and oppression, look, we pray, with an eye of love upon this our land, Italy!

"Taught by the holy law in the sublime words of Thy Prophets, we Hebrews of Italy, in these days sacred to the *Patria*, feel our hearts burn and palpitate for the cause of Italy, for the fate of Italy, and for the victory of Italy. We feel to-day more living, more strong, more ardent our love for this our *Patria*, which permits us always to follow Thy Divine Word, and which loves us like sons: and to her, with fervent longing, we give our hearts and our sons!

"Oh Lord of the universe! Be Thou with us! May Thy right arm weaken the enemy and be a shield and defence to the Italian armies; make them strong and vigorous by Thy mighty power—with Thy extended arm bless them,

save them from the murderous wiles of the enemy, since from Thee alone can come help and salvation; make the just cause to prosper, Thou who hast always loved justice!

"Our Father! Gather, we pray, into Thy celestial kingdom the souls of our brothers fallen for the glory of Italy, receive them in Thine arms, and grant them eternal reward, eternal peace!

"Comfort and support the suffering wounded and mutilated, be Thou the Father of the orphan, sustain and protect the forsaken mothers and the unhappy widows.

"*May all the oppressed be released*, and come to us, the brothers whom tradition, history, and language consecrate as Italians.

"Make cruelty and oppression to cease everywhere and may liberty be given in all parts of the earth to our brothers in Israel.

"Oh Lord of the universe! Take away evil from the world, hasten the day of justice and of love, of truth and of peace. Make to cease the horrors, the wars, the fierce passions, to give place to universal brotherhood and to Thy eternal Kingdom.

"Bend the bow and break the spear in sunder, we pray Thee, and make wars to cease even to the uttermost parts of the earth. Amen."

CHAPTER II

THE KING

As every one who has at all followed the story of Italy's war knows, there is no soldier, high or low in rank, who has served his country with greater zeal and faithfulness than the first soldier, King Victor Emanuel III. Wherever there has been danger or suffering or anxiety or privation, he has come. He has borne his share of every peril, often exposing his life to great risks; he has cheered the wounded in the battle and on beds of anguish, and has stood by the dying. He has lived as the soldiers live, eating their simple rations and dividing his portion with others when necessary. He has been ever ready with words of comfort and sympathy, and wherever he has gone, up and down the lines, all along the front in his unobtrusive grey automobile, it has been to give wise counsel or to relieve some distress.

Simply, like any other soldier, he has taken his few days' leave and returned to his post of duty unostentatiously and almost unrecognised, in the train carrying hundreds of other men similarly dressed, who also have been allowed to go home to see their families. Back at the front he makes his headquarters in a very modest little villa, where perfect simplicity reigns, and from whence he goes out to travel wherever his presence seems

most needed. He is up at dawn, or before it, and off and away. He rests very little, and is always to be found on active service.

Often in exposed positions, in danger of an enemy's shot, or it may be of the attack of a mad assassin such as brought to an end the life of his father, he still goes on his way, so far unharmed and safe. The prayers of his people rise for him everywhere and always; may they be answered and he be protected and his life preserved:

VIVA IL RE!

. . . .

The soldiers have their stories to tell about him:—

"Yesterday" (said the sub-lieutenant) "was the most beautiful and historic day for me, for I had the good fortune to approach and speak to the King. I saw with what modesty the Sovereign, seated on the ground, was eating his lunch in the midst of all of us, giving sausages and cheese and whatever he had to the soldiers. I myself had the gift of some cherries.—*June* 1915."

. . . .

"My regiment fought all the night of June 2nd, from midnight until six in the morning, and covered itself with glory in four impetuous bayonet attacks. At dawn I fell wounded, and so was brought to the hospital at Caporeto. There I was the witness of a scene which I shall never forget: on that very morning the King came to the field hospital and visited all the wounded, among which was I; and he said to us:—

"'Courage, brave boys!' Then, greatly moved, he bent down over each one of us and kissed us all. And when the Sovereign left, he was saluted by all of us with a formidable '*Viva l'Italia! Viva il Re!*'"

. . . .

"It was on an evening of early June at the hour of sunset that the King was about to pass over the river Isonzo.

"An officer informed him that an attack of the enemy was imminent and that it was not prudent for His Majesty to remain in so exposed a position. Whereupon the King answered:

"'If this point is dangerous for my brave soldiers, this is the place for me.'

"And he insisted on remaining there until after dark, encouraging and cheering the soldiers."

A correspondent who speaks of the numerous episodes of the life of the King at the front says that there is not a single section on all the vast frontier which he has left unexplored; that he has passed everywhere with serenity and bravery; that he does not take an hour for repose; he has no rest from anxiety; and passes many nights without a roof over him.

"Indeed" (goes on the writer of this letter) "he is literally everywhere: during this first month of our victorious war I have seen him everywhere. The first time was beyond Cormons on the plain leading to the Isonzo. A regiment of field artillery was passing below. The King stood looking on, and for a whole half hour his hand remained immovable at his cap in salute. Shouts of surprise

and enthusiasm came up from the soldiers: '*Viva il Re! Viva Savoia!*' The regiment was going on towards victory with the inaugural salute of the King. . . .

"Another time I saw him on the Carnico-Cadorino frontier. A terrible storm was threatening. The peasants advised the General to stop in the village, but the King, on horseback, galloped ahead to encourage some of the Alpini who were at an altitude of 1500 metres. He was without a mantle. Three hours later, at eight o'clock in the evening, the King was still there with the Alpini, while the storm was raging in all its violence. He went into one of the tents and shared the food of the men (tinned meat) and drank a little marsala, after which he wanted to go on. An officer lent him his mantle. The storm had ceased, but it was already dark night, so the King remained with the soldiers, sleeping in one of the tents wrapped in the borrowed cape. At dawn he was on his feet and came out, to be greeted with shouts from the troops drawn up on the mountain. . . .

"Another day the King appeared on horseback unexpectedly at a high fortification where there was an encampment of Bersaglieri, and where he was received with great pleasure and enthusiasm. It was the hour for lunch. The King tasted the meat and then ordered them to prepare the meal. All the battalion were made to sit down, together with the King, who entered into an animated conversation with those near him. One of the corporals to whom a question was addressed, rose to his feet to reply, when His Majesty remonstrated with him, telling him to eat in quiet and reserve his strength, and then turning to the Captain, he said, 'Captain, may we have some of your biscuits?' At once twelve boxes of biscuits were brought out and distributed to all the company.

"The lunch was hardly finished when a great roar was heard near: the cannon. . . . Heavy firing was beginning. The King talked with the officers, then turning to the Bersaglieri he said:

"'Good; it is the cannon on the other side of the Isonzo: prepare to advance: in an hour's time there will be need of your bayonets.'

"In ten minutes more than a thousand Bersaglieri were completely armed, and there was great movement and excitement, officers and subalterns went rapidly here and there. Curt orders flew through the air. . . .

"Then followed a scene profoundly moving. The battalion knew that there was bayonet work before them, but each one of the men wished to salute the King before the attack began and to present arms. He spoke to each one a word of praise and encouragement:

"'Forward, boys: let us go and give a final lesson to the Austrians. Let us show them what our bayonets are, we who fight in the name of Savoy. In line!'

"It was the King himself who gave the order. The soldiers with their frenzied enthusiasm held themselves back with difficulty as they waited for the word, the King sitting on one side erect on his horse with his eyes sparkling.

"The battalion was ready to run: not a foot was out of line, not a bayonet out of place.

"Four Bersaglieri gave a blast of the trumpet which seemed a shout. One voice, that of the King, spoke: 'Forward!'

"It was not a march but a leap forward. All the battalion filed before the King. Cries went up from all sides: '*Evviva!*'

"'Your Majesty, we will conquer and return, all of us.

Viva la Regina! We shall reach Vienna. *Viva Savoia!* Forward, Bersaglieri of the King! '

"Not until the last smiling soldier had passed did the King change his position, standing in his stirrups, bending his head to them affectionately and frequently raising his hand to the salute.

"Such is the King who shares all the life of the soldiers and has such a large part in bringing encouragement to them in all moments of sorrow and excitement and joy. From the beginning of the war and all through it he has ever been the same. No wonder that he is adored by the army.—*June* 1915."

"The King too has often been present at the spectacle of death and where the brave soldiers were wounded. On one such occasion there were carried by him two dead and two wounded, barely escaped from the enemy's fire. One of these latter, a Bersagliere, whose leg was crushed and almost detached from his body, said to the King, pointing to it:—

"'For you, *Maesta!*' And in his voice there was no sound of suppressed weeping, but the sweetness of one who gives a willing gift.

"Grave, bringing his hand to his cap, the King answered:—

"'No, my son, but for Italy!' . . .

"The stretcher-bearers came by, carrying the body of a dead soldier. At a sign from the King they stopped. The King approached and fixed his gaze on the dead youth. He raised his hand in salute, and those standing near saw that his lips were moving and that he prayed. The King was praying. Over the humble, unknown son of Italy the King of Italy prayed in the name of Italy. Far

away, a mother, unknowing, perhaps was repeating the same prayer. . . ."

. . . .

"With the wounded, the King has a sublime tenderness, and often his automobile stops by the way and he gets down to come near to the passing ambulance, to cheer and bring comfort to the suffering men. There is not a single act of heroism to which he has not given immediate recognition and words of thanks. For example, he wanted to know all the Alpini and he shook hands with them all, and spoke to each one."

. . . .

A young sub-lieutenant, wounded and in hospital, writes to his mother:—

"ZONA DI GUERRA.

"DEAREST MAMMA,—Yesterday was a festival for all the hospital. From early in the morning we noticed an unusual amount of movement—all the attendants and nurses intent on decorating and beautifying our wards: we were waiting for His Majesty the King, but we did not wait long.

"He came into our ward where the son of the Minister of War, Lieutenant Morrone, is being cared for. . . .

"His Majesty stopped at the beds of all, and at mine also, asking my name, where I was from and where I had been wounded, and so on. Then he saluted me with his sweet smile, gave me his good wishes, and retired with his suite to return to the front.

"What kindness and gentleness are in his manners: you may well believe that his presence contributes largely to the morale of the troops. The man who has the pleasure of speaking to him is indeed proud, he feels all his patriotism

aroused, and longs to press forward and throw himself into any danger, at the cost even of his life.

"This is why we resist; this is why we conquer. Kisses and all my love.—Thy UMBERTO."

A few words of explanation in regard to the so-called *irredente* territory, for the recovery of which the King and his brave soldiers are fighting, may not be out of place here, and may help to make Italy's position clearer.

One hears of Trent and Trieste, and all the world knows that Italy is aiming at bringing them back to her own dominion and under her protection where they rightfully belong, and at liberating them from "the stranger's yoke." But the lands which really have a right to be brought into the Kingdom of Italy are not only the Trentino (by which we mean the province and region about the city of Trent) and Trieste, but five other little provinces. These seven, which are really Italian, though subject to Austria, are Trent, the Alto Adige, the eastern part of Friuli, Trieste and the Carso (as the country around it is called), Istria of San Marco, Fiume with the islands of Quarnero and Dalmatia. This is not the place to go into the many reasons why and how these provinces have come under the hated Austrian dominion, though they are inhabited almost entirely by Italian-speaking peoples, and look back to Rome in their traditions.

But the boundaries of Italy as they exist to-day are not her real confines. Not only is this a matter of history, but from a geographical as well as

ethnical point of view, she should reach in her dominion her ancient limits. Bounded by these, safely guarded as they are by the bulwark of the Alpine chains above Trent running across into the Giulian Alps above Tolmino and Gorizia, and with the provinces on the eastern Adriatic shore (once Venetian) protecting her from Austrian invasion, Italy might rest secure and at peace.

The people of all these provinces long to be taken back. They look to Italy as their Mother Country, and want no stranger's rule. For long years the bondage has been growing heavier and the Austrians more cruel. It is not necessary to cite instances to prove this. The remembrance of Oberdan and the story of his martyrdom is enough.

As has been said, " While Italy has tried to make the chain bearable, Austria has exhausted herself to render it insupportable, so much so that every time our diplomacy succeeded in procuring the comfort of a period of quiet, Austria seemed bent on making the weight of the chain still heavier, and long periods, though marked by hymns of solidarity and friendship, were distinguished by facts calculated to dispel all illusions. There were the offensive preparations for war on the confines, the annexations of Bosnia, the projects for Balkan railways, the brutal contempt for Italian feelings, the premeditated, systematic destruction of our race within the boundaries of the Empire.

"In these provinces the Italian cause has suffered humiliations, injuries, tortures, a long history of intrigues, of premeditated aggressions which made our alliance with Austria a vain irony."

It might have been that the " distractions of the country, the love of a quiet life, the depression of the national conscience, maintained and determined by flattering diplomacy, should have made us forgetful of our duty towards civilisation in general and should have imposed silence on the voice of our brothers—who would perhaps have been kept out forever from the *Patria*, if we had been willing to accept another, but no less dishonest and for us disastrous, boundary—and would have destroyed Italy's reasons for existence. But Italy was not so unworthy of herself. At the appeal of the King, who will be, like his glorious grandfather, the first soldier of Italian Independence, the Government made a response that was worthy of the energetic efforts of the people, the valour and enthusiasm of our glorious army and our intrepid navy."

CHAPTER III

JUNE IN THE FIELD—STORIES AND LETTERS OF BRAVE MEN

Two Kinds of Recruits

"As I was waiting my turn in the recruiting office, a countryman came up with his son, a lad of eighteen, who wanted to enlist. The crowd was very great, one could scarcely breathe, it was a very hot day. . . . The entry was made but the father did not move, and bending over the officer he whispered:

"'I want to enlist, too!'

"The officer looked at him.

"'How old are you?'

"'Fifty.'

"'Impossible. I'm very sorry, my good man, but you've passed the age-limit.' . . . And, making a sign to me, he said:

"'Forward. It's your turn.'

"'This is a queer business, a nice way of doing things. . . . Age-limits indeed!'

"For the next few minutes the crowded, dusty office echoed with the picturesque but ungrammatical accents of the countryman. Then all at once he became calmer, looked about him, crushed his cap in his hand, and began to beg and implore like a child.

"The officer hesitated for a moment, and then with a cheerful voice, he said:

"'It's your son's regiment you want to go into, isn't it?'

"Father and son went off as happily together as if they had just won a prize in the lottery."

. . . .

"He is just fifteen years of age, and not a day more. Like one in a dream he has seen flowing past him the stream of persons of every age and every condition, which from seven in the morning till mid-day has passed through the offices of the *Pretura*. His eyes are weary now, his limbs fail him, and he does not notice that the rooms are emptying and that a truce has come to the feverish work.

"Some one approached him.

"'What art thou doing, my boy? It's dinner-time. Go home!'

"He shakes his head.

"'I'm not hungry. I want to enlist.'

"'Thou enlist? Oh, that's a great idea! Thou art scarcely weaned yet, I should say.'

"'I want to enlist.'

"Poor boy. Tall, pale, emaciated; his face with an almost infantile expression.

"'Madness. Dost thou not know, little one, that soldiers live like beasts of the field, march till their feet bleed, suffer hunger and thirst, and feel death near them by day and by night? Little lad, dost thou think that war is a march to the sound of trumpets, amidst the neighing of horses and the waving of banners? Listen to me. Go home!'

"'I want to enlist,' insisted the resolute young voice.

"'But why?' asked the officer, becoming irritated.

"'Because Mamma is dead!'"

. . . .

A letter from Alfeo Baldi, sergeant of a cyclists' company of the Bersaglieri:—

"*June 2nd*, 1915.

"DEAREST PARENTS,—I am writing from a beautiful little village whose name I may not give. A few hours of 'Italianism' have been sufficient to give joy again to this poor population who were dying of hunger. We Bersaglieri, particularly, are regarded with a certain curiosity and respect which makes us see with pleasure that we are the first Italian soldiers to arrive here. Our hearts are torn at the sight of so much misery, and we are giving away things which might, many times, be convenient for us, for to have money here is the same as to be without it. We are obliged to eat only that which the Government gives us. But as I have said above, we take the food from our mouths to relieve the hunger of these people, especially the tiny babies. The mothers thank us with their eyes, and that is enough for us.

"You may believe that we who have the honour of being the first here are very proud of it and very happy together. On the first morning, when I and my men cut the wire which stretched across the frontier, my heart beat so hard and I was so overcome with emotion that I cannot express what I felt as we passed over on our own soil where the invader had trampled.

"We entered the first village with bayonets fixed,

holding our handle bars with one hand and our guns with the other, in order to be ready for any surprise. At first, we saw no one, but soon the doors and windows began to open and people looked out. Having explored this place, we went on.

"We cyclists are less easily seen, and go more quietly than the cavalry; we slip along the roads, and when there are no roads, machine on shoulder, in a moment we disappear to come out again in another place further on. To-day we are here, to-morrow there, to the right, to the left,—never tired, always young and strong and ready for our duty.

"In the last firing in which I took part, a ball wanted to joke with me, and lifted seven or eight feathers from my hat. What would you? I thanked it for the respect which it had had for my head.

"I do not need you to tell me to do my duty, for that is what I am doing. I must tell you that I, with seven or eight brave Bersaglieri, cut the enemy's wire in the open, and you may believe that the bullets were coming like hail, and that besides there was the electricity in the wire, but we had rubber shoes and came to no harm.—Salutations from your son, Alfeo Baldi."

Pasquale Tempesta, corporal of artillery, was another of those patriotic sons who on the outbreak of the war wrote noble words to his mother:—

"Dear Mamma,—Yesterday, I put the military uniform on again. My regiment is ready to leave for the destination of which we are ignorant; we are waiting only for the order to start, proud to belong to the army in this solemn

moment in which we all hope to prove our heroism and bravery by fighting and conquering our eternal enemies as soon as possible; for the redemption of our lands and of our brothers who for more than fifty years have been suffering from the savagery of Austria. These thoughts overcome the grief of going so far away from the family. I cannot wait for the hour of departure. We are Italians and we must not allow ourselves to be overcome by grief. . . . The first shot which bursts from our cannon will foretell victory and the glory of our banner. If I die, do not weep for my loss, for I know how to die as a hero, embracing my cannon.

"When grief overcomes thee, *mamma mia*, turn thy thoughts towards the great ones who died for the *Patria*, and cry united with me and all the people, *Evviva l'Italia! Evviva il Re!*

"Kiss my brothers and sisters; I embrace thee and Papa.—Thy son, PASQUALINO."

. . . .

One likes the spirit of this young man, who also was one of the first on the field:—

"On the morning of the 24th, as you know from the papers, the war began. The first cannon was fired at precisely half-past four, and exactly at that hour we crossed the frontier and entered Austrian territory.

"At the first bridge on the confines we find some Austrian soldiers intent on cutting it to prevent our passing. On our beginning to fire they take flight. Then we follow and on the other side of the bridge we find six dead and a few wounded; going on into the village we take one hundred and fifty prisoners. Of our men but two are wounded.

"I have been very fortunate for the first day. Ordered to take observations, I with nine others had to go to the village of Chiopris (these are places which are well known by now to have been occupied by our troops so I may mention them) and see whether it was occupied by the Austrians. While we were advancing carefully through the grain, some cannon shots fell, but not in our direction. . . . Arrived at the end of the village, we find the street barricaded by about eight metres of barbed wire which we cut with our bayonets. Further ahead, we have two other obstructions to pass over, one of trunks of trees and the other of carts. Getting over these obstacles, we begin to inspect the houses, where we enter with fixed bayonets. The poor devils we find are terrified; they are trembling and they beg us not to do them any harm, and we have to reassure them with kind words, while they say, between their tears, that they are our brothers. Here in Austria they are dying of hunger, and even we poor soldiers can find nothing to eat. The Austrians as they retire, burn and destroy everything which we could use—bridges, stores, beer, warehouses, in short everything.

"Turning back we go to the general who commands us to bring him the news, and to tell him that the village is free from the enemy, and that they are running with their legs in the air. General M—— gets down from his automobile, grasps us by the hand, and then turning to his staff who follow him, he says:—

"'If all the Bersaglieri were like these ten, in a few days we should be at Trieste.' Then he said to us:—

"'I praise you for your service rendered, but you must look out another time, for ten soldiers are too few to occupy a village. *Bravi.* Go on.' And now as I think it over, I realise that it was a great risk, so few in number as we

were, to enter a place occupied by the enemy, since we did not know what we might have encountered.—*June* 1915."

Sergeant Giuseppe Carugati of the 12th Bersaglieri gives an interesting description of the sensations experienced under fire:—

"With what an angry whistle this shrapnel comes. You hear a kind of loud humming which comes nearer and nearer and grows louder. You wait with suspended heart-beats and eyes stretched wide to see, or rather to try to guess the direction, and you stay like that, anxiously waiting, in doubt whether this time you may not be hit, until a '*spem*' and a yellowish cloud show the point where it has exploded. Then everybody talks and laughs and makes comments; but when that famous humming begins you notice the change in the voice which gives the now familiar order, 'Attention, it is coming!'"

Carugati gives some news of the operations carried out by his regiment and then goes on:—

"I have passed many hours full of varied emotions in going about this picturesque valley on patrol; sleeping a little under a tent, or in a hay-mow, and sometimes under the open sky wrapped in a wet blanket. Now the fine weather has returned—but thou knowest how wet we have been! Remember, however, that I do not say this to complain or to have myself pitied, for I should be displeased if any one were to be sorry for me.

"Thou knowest that I do not say that I have no fear; no. When one goes scouting, especially in the woods,—and we are on the defensive, that is to say, in two lines, one with the front to the right and the other to the left,—with

loaded guns and fixed bayonets, with the realisation that from one minute to another a shot may split one's head open,—then,—in such conditions every rustling one hears makes one shiver and clench one's teeth. At the same time fear forces one to leap ahead and see what the danger is. (It is an undefinable feeling which I do not know how to describe to thee, but which is unendurable if it cannot be stopped.) Then one bursts out laughing at the sight of a crow flying away or a squirrel leaping from a tree. We pass hours of such nervous tension that we do not feel the weight of the knapsack any more and only notice the fatigue in the shoulders when we take it off. Terrible, too, are the bayonet attacks. One sees men of from twenty-five to thirty years weeping as they give the fateful cry *Savoia!*—12 *June* 1915."

Of the same date is this letter of Noel Quintavalle, lieutenant of the Alpini, written from the front to his mother. After giving some information as to the progress made, he says:—

"In spite of the weather, which is enough to make one weep, the morale of the soldiers is very high. The brave boys have already gained much confidence in firing, and they jest with the cannon balls.

"They are right in not being afraid, for in spite of the infernal fire of the enemy, our losses are of the slightest. I begin now to see what a thing moral force is.

"A corporal who was wounded by shrapnel near me refused all our offers of help; although he was badly hurt he would go alone to the dressing station, and while his wound was being dressed he kept on encouraging his companions:

"'Up, forward: ever forward. We must get on up there. I shall come and join you presently. Courage, Italy! You see,' he said later as he was being carried down to the valley, 'one must act like that so that they won't be too much distressed!' . . .

"The principal victims we have had are among the poor mules: not because they get killed, but because, slipping down these terribly steep roads, it is almost impossible to haul them up on account of the deep mud. The weather is dreadful! I would go two days without eating, or remain for hours under fire, if I could have a mouthful of sunlight. And instead there is mist, mist, so that we cannot see two steps ahead. When the mist breaks, it rains; when the rain ceases, comes a wind that lifts one from the ground. In compensation, however, we feel the certainty of success which sustains us greatly.

"Meanwhile we are building and working to make ourselves comfortable as usual, *à la* Robinson Crusoe. Besides all the preparations for shelter which we are continually improving, we have also been making cover for our tents. We have dug out, also, a kind of grotto in the mountain, our 'assembly hall,' as the captain calls it. There we have made seats with boards taken from demolished houses, many seats, and there we eat, we collect together and talk, and when there is no mist we enjoy a panorama so beautiful that I cannot describe it."

. . . .

"Where they all speak Italian."

"My dearest Parents,—I am writing to give you news of myself and of my brother-in-law Alfonso. We are well and we hope that you are too. We have entered the

province of Trieste and we have already occupied five little townships.

"When we entered these beautiful villages, everybody shouted '*Viva l'Italia!*' and all the women threw flowers and brought drinks and treated us as though we had been their sons. There are some families here who have six or seven of their sons at the war. You should see how much courage they have! We ourselves are quartered on a family of which there are sixteen under arms: it is a very large family. At home there are now twelve children and fourteen women, and they are as brave as though nothing unusual had happened. Here they all speak Italian.—CONCEZIO DEL NEGRO."

"*June* 15, 1915.

". . . This story of mine will show you how kind they are and what good hearts our soldiers have. The day of the 14th some of my companions and I had gone down to a river to wash some clothes, when all at once we heard a noise which came from a small lane near which crossed the wood. With a jump we left the work to make sure who might be coming, and with guns in hand we were ready for any surprise, when instead of an enemy we saw coming towards us a poor woman, haggard and thin, who was dragging a little cart loaded with wood, and behind her came a small child who could scarcely walk. I was the nearest and I asked her where she came from; she answered me, weeping, that she had come from the depth of the forest, where she had been working with great difficulty to gather wood for the next winter. Then continuing, she said:

"'Dear boys, I too have an only son like you, he is fighting with Austria in the Carpathians and he has not written for six months!'

"I asked her about her husband, and she said that he had been dead for some time. The poor woman was not able to go any further, and we took the cart, and I, as I always do, took the little one in my arms, and we accompanied her along the road. When we had to leave her she blessed us, wishing us a good victory and a happy return to our families, and she went on so as to reach her village before nightfall, and we returned to our work, glad of what we had done, and I especially contented because I had been able to kiss that baby, who, overcome by weariness, had gone to sleep in my arms. . . .—Your son, FEDERIGO."

About the middle of June, in the first enthusiasm of the war, the doctor, Captain Angelo Alberti of Pesaro, writes a letter so full of interest and picturesque description that it cannot be omitted from among those which show us, more than any other writing could do, the inner life of the soldiers and their noble spirit:—

"MY DEAREST MARIA,—To-day I have a little more time and so I can write to thee a little more at length than usual: my writing-desk is a rustic table in a peasant's kitchen, in the village of ——.

"It is quiet here: the cannon, which during the past days, even yesterday, has never ceased, so far leaves us in peace here.

"The work is great, the war grows rougher; but victory will come; and so much the more will it be precious, in proportion to the sacrifices and the strain necessary for its attainment. Our town, my Maria, is now writing the most glorious page of its history in blood. Each one of us feels this, and every sacrifice is light. Every brave and perilous

action of the war leaves us calm, cool, ready at our post of honour. The soldiers! I shall never, when I return, have done telling about them: they are marvellous: peasants from the country near Venice, waggoners from Sicily and Apulia, diggers from the Marches, educated farmers from Tuscany, brave and honest mountaineers from the Abruzzi, work, fight, dare death at every moment, and sing.

"In the evening, at vespers, when there comes that brief pause which marks the interval between the action of the day and that of the night, they collect in groups in the courtyards, at the doors of the little houses, and sing the village songs accompanied by some chords on a guitar. And the hour and the song bring to life, as we have never seen it, the image of Italy, that is to say, of all which is ours, of all that we love, of all that forms a part of ourselves, the intimate reason of our being. And the heart swells, not with sorrow nor with grief, my Maria, but with the sweetest emotion, which refreshes us after every fatigue and every danger and turns the brain, the heart, the muscles, fresh and firm to the duty which presses.

"And now a little of myself: my health has been and still is greatly benefited by the rough life which I lead, and when I come home thou wilt see me bronzed, hardened by fatigues, younger, more robust.

"Thou shouldest see my so-called bedroom! A rough ceiling, under the roof: a sack stuffed with maize husks for a bed, a board on two trestles for a table, two low windows like pigeon-holes and without glass in the sashes: and . . . a companion of whom I was not aware on the first evening, I slept so soundly, but whom I discovered last night: a poor, partly featherless hen, dying of hunger, abandoned by the proprietor in his flight. The dining-room

is a poem:—a room on the ground floor, with a roof so low that one must bend over on entering: a little glass cupboard on one side, holding a few dirty plates, and the first thing one sees, the portrait of an Austrian soldier: the son of the former proprietor. The companions whom I have with me, including the major commanding the section, are all Abruzzesi: the best of comrades, always in good humour, with whom I pass a brotherly life. Sometimes we have newspapers, and then it is a festival;—the post plays curious freaks; at times there is silence for two or three consecutive days; then a letter comparatively recent, then two or three letters . . . dated May!—*June* 16, 1915."

From another brave volunteer, happy in the service which he has undertaken:—

"*June* 1915.

"Dear Uncle,—We have arrived here all well; —— miles beyond the ancient confines; we are in our beautiful 'unredeemed' land, where the sun glows warmly over the beautiful, luxuriant valley; we are under the sky of Italy where all nature is in harmony. *Evviva l'Italia!* . . .

"I am well, my mind is greatly excited, moments of frenzy seize me at times, at the sound of our cannon.

"Last evening, in fact, while I was in a hay-loft, where we had gone to sleep, about nine o'clock while all was still I heard the first firing of cannon. Violent shivering shook me convulsively. It was not fear, no, *perdio!* but joy, true joy.

"I could see in imagination our brave artillerymen with bronzed faces, with steady shining eyes, as they grasped their guns with their strong hands, bending over, one to

aim, one to fire; such an imaginative vision of their important work that it might almost be exalted as a symbol of the spirit of our Italy."

. . . .

From a letter written on the Carnia front:—

"Here is a story that I was told lately. A certain Giordano, sergeant in a company of the Alpini, had succeeded in getting into his possession, a few at a time, a number of Austrian guns and a good deal of ammunition. Now he does not shoot any more from the heights of Pal Piccolo with his own gun, but with one of the various 'Mausers' which he keeps by him. He says that with the 'Mausers' he aims better against the Germans, because in that way he returns to them in 'pills' that which he has taken away from them. I think that this original type of hero will be proposed for the medal for valour, which he will add to the one he has already received in Libya."

. . . .

Of a splendid example of courage and modesty combined, the following letter tells:—

"The brave deeds accomplished by our men have sometimes an air almost legendary about them. They are so much above the ordinary that they seem improbable. . . .

"These acts of extraordinary courage are very numerous. Often the actors remain unknown, in the company of the obscure heroes who have already given to our war a glory as of other days.

"There is the Alpino, for instance, who alone held back a half company of Austrians, killing one after the other, until he had disposed of sixteen. And I have not been able to learn even his name.

"I have seen him and spoken to him. His brave deed was recounted to me by his comrades, for the hero is a mountaineer of many deeds but few words, who, when the moment comes for speaking of himself, is mute.

"It was by his own order, imposed on his comrades, that they refused to tell me what he was called. But his noble deed I know, and I give the account of it with the precision which it merits.

"This Alpino is a sturdy young fellow, with something of a heavy air, but energetic, and he wears a short black beard. . . . He concealed himself behind a rising ground, and began to fire with precision. He took aim with calm deliberation, he fired, then aimed again. He lifted the rifle from his shoulder only when he had to put in a fresh charge.

"He did excellent work, bringing down every once in a while a *Kaiser-jäger*.

"This magnificent game lasted more than a half hour, at the end of which time his comrades, hearing the crack of the rifle, came to his assistance."

. . . .

And here follows another story of a daring Alpino. This act of bravery took place in the Cadore, at the "Three Peaks" of Ladaredo:—

"A patrol of Alpini discovered that the Austrians were planning to mine under one of our advanced trenches. But to be sure of the intention of the enemy, it was necessary to lower one of our men by a rope over a steep precipice, so that he might see what was going on.

"Darkness had already fallen and favoured the terrible undertaking. An Alpino, the father of a large family, asked to be chosen for the task, urging his experience in similar cases. Consent was given.

"Before being let down he said: 'I will take my gun and a few cartridges with me'—and he was allowed to descend slowly and with great care. As soon as he reached a narrow crack between the rocks, he discovered four men bent down under our trench. He began to fire at their dark forms and he saw one of them roll down the side of the mountain, while the others melted away, while the echo of his firing was repeated from one part of the mountain to the other as though there had been a number of men shooting.

"The soldiers who were holding the rope began to pull up their heroic companion with great anxiety lest the rope should be broken by some shot of the enemy, or that perhaps they should draw up a dead man; but after a few minutes they had their brave comrade in their arms again, rejoicing that he had baffled the enemy.

"Of all these luminous gems of bravery is constituted the gradual advance in the Dolomites."

. . . .

Here is a story interesting as illustrating the self-sacrifice of another Alpino.

His name was Luigi Girardi, a native of Grenoble, but an Italian of Racconigi on his mother's side, who, as soon as war was declared, returned here to offer his services and was soon sent to the front.

The story comes from his aunt, Vittoria Barale, and was sent to her by the captain commanding his company, in a noble letter, enclosing a generous sum of money, "to be spent in any way she thought best."

"During the battle of ——, on the — day of June, the —— Company of the —— Regiment of Alpini had four

men killed whose bodies, on account of the vicissitudes of the action, had to be abandoned where they fell.

"They talked of recovering these bodies to give them proper burial, but the attempt was very dangerous, the position being under the enemy's fire, so that other soldiers would be exposed to the same fate: therefore the pious task was put off until the next day in the hope that the position would be then free from the enemy, and it was decided to confide the affair to one Alpino only.

"In the morning the Alpino, Luigi Girardi, already proposed for the silver medal for military valour, offered himself voluntarily to his captain for the difficult and dangerous operation. . . .

"Taking his orders, which were to attach a strong manilla rope to the bodies, and arrange so that they could be drawn up in the night, he went down the mountain, following the bed of a stream, going on until he reached his dead comrades.

"He saluted, taking off his cap, and attaching the rope to the bodies, he attempted to drag them to a sheltered spot where they would be out of sight and range of the enemy.

"But on account of the great amount of snow, he was not able to accomplish his object. Receiving the order to bury the dead men in a crevice of the rocks, he completed his work, lowering them tenderly into an opening in the mountain, where he covered them with their mantles and placed over them a light layer of snow.

"Having finished his task he returned to the trench, after having been away an hour and five minutes.

"Because he offered himself voluntarily to go and bury the four men in a place exposed to the enemy's fire, and because he carried out the task which he had undertaken

with such calm and from such a high sense of duty, he made such an impression on the enemy that they ceased firing; he was recommended for other medals by his captain.

"And the major in his turn confirmed the recommendation of the captain, proposing that Girardi's deed should be the subject of a special order of the day, which should be read to all the troops of the group."

. . . .

A Few Letters to the loved Members of the Family

An old man, a "Garibaldino," the veteran of the *Risorgimento*, is Fortunato Salimbeni. His days are passed in a home for old men, where he is well taken care of together with others of his old companions. His son bids fair to be his worthy follower, and to win medals like those which the old soldier wears upon his breast. He writes to his father on June 27, 1915:—

"Dear Father,—I am perfectly well in health and I am longing for the moment when I too can win medals as you have done. Keep cheerful, *Babbo;* if that time you were not able to take Trent and Trieste, *you will see that we are sure to take them.*

"If you could see the spirit of the troops and the fierce longing to fight! Be happy, and you will see that soon I will send you news and letters from the Italian lands *conquered again for always.*

"I am expecting letters. Kisses and embraces also to Mamma.—From your son, Nello."

The author of the next letter is a Capuchin monk from Viterbo.

"FROM THE ALPS, *June* 1915.

"DEAREST FATHER,—I am very well in health, as I hope that you all are. I have no fear of the rumbling of the enemy's cannon, whose projectiles fall sometimes not more than two or three hundred metres from our camp. To show fear would be the same as being a coward, and to such an one I should like to show that in my veins there courses that noble blood of Italy, careless of dangers and ready to bathe the earth where the *Patria* needs it.

"It troubles me that now thou art left alone; but do not be discouraged; show also thou, like so many heroes of the War of Independence, that for the *Patria* thou knowest how to sacrifice all that is most dear to thee, and be proud that thou hast four sons who in this great moment are loyally serving the country.

"Even at this hour in which I am writing we hear from time to time the enemy's shells falling very near: but we are not afraid, and Italy pursues her high destiny.—DECIO."

. . . .

"*July* 2, 1915.

"Mamma, dear Mamma, listen to the prayer which comes from a heart longing for thee, and from a mind imagining who can say what things of thee. Live tranquilly, Mamma, for on thy tranquillity, on thy peace, depend my fate. I shall be courageous, I shall be strong, I shall conquer in so far as thou art strong, in so far that thou supportest with resignation and bravery this pain which I unwillingly give thee. But think, Mamma, that when I return thou wilt be proud of me, when I have done

my duty and spent my strength for the good of my dear ones, of our *Patria*. And this pride, this joy, will be all owing to thee, because thou givest me courage, Mamma, thou givest me the strength to fight, it is thou who personifiest all the persons who are dear and whom I love so much.

"Loving, reverencing thee, Mamma dear, I love all who love me, because if I think of thee, I see all, I see my home, my family which is and which will be. And I want it to be thou, Mamma, who wilt implant courage in all, thou only who canst, thou only who art my mother. Turn thy eyes towards me, Mamma, and look at me, I will try ever harder to deserve thy love, I will try always to make myself more worthy of thee, of dear *Babbo*, of you both, beloved parents, who gave me life and created me in your likeness.—Your RENATO TARGETTI."

. . . .

"DEAR PAPA,—The day before yesterday I sent you a postcard after several days in which I had not been able to send you any news of myself. You must, however, pardon me for that, because, as I have already written, it is necessary to keep busy fighting the hated and cursed Austrians. Now you may believe how satisfied I am, what satisfaction one feels in fighting for our country, for beautiful and great Italy, for our dear and beloved King.

"At the first shots, before throwing myself into the attack, I thought of you all, and it seemed to me as though you had blessed me, and with my heart turned towards you, I rushed forward with the cry of *Viva l'Italia* on my lips. We have advanced and occupied all the positions of these dogs. Our losses are very small and theirs great: therefore you must be content, and soon you shall have the satisfaction of again embracing your Giulino safe and sound.

"They treat us very well here; they give us everything, beginning with food, which we have in abundance. Imagine how proud I am to call myself an Italian soldier, and to be fighting for a just and holy cause which should exalt our *Patria* still further, and liberate our brothers from the yoke of the oppressor. Think always of me and this will bring me the good fortune which will help me everywhere. I beg you to be ever courageous and to have faith in our arms.

"After this, before you receive any further news of me, some days may pass, therefore do not be anxious. I have nothing further to say.

"Tell Dreina that she must always be a good little girl. Kiss my Giorgino, Adriana, and Alfredo, and remember me to all the family. Many, many kisses to my dear little Mamma, and tell her that she must have some of the courage of which I have so much. . . . Receive many kisses and embraces from your son, GIULIO."

. . . .

"DEAR BABBO,—As you will have already understood from a postcard which I wrote you while on my way to the hospital, I have been slightly wounded in my foot. A cursed ball has removed me from the front, and has dragged me away from the battle-field where I was fighting for my country. You cannot imagine what pain I suffered in having to leave the front; I was becoming so accustomed to being there, that now it seems as though I were in an immense vacuum, not hearing the roar of the cannon, the bursting of the shells, the angry whistling of the projectiles which were continually passing over our heads.

"I was wounded while I with three others had gone scouting to see whether we could discover the enemy. We had arrived almost at the enemy's trenches without

being discovered when an Austrian sentry fired from an ambush and wounded me. But I was unconscious of the wound, and after we had sheltered ourselves we opened fire on him, causing him to fall from a tree in which he was hidden.

"As soon as we got back the captain and all the soldiers embraced us, for they had thought that we would not return, seeing that when we fired on the sentry the enemy from their trench had fired many kilograms of balls at us, which, however, went into the empty air.

"But the most satisfactory thing for us is an attack with the bayonet. What joy we feel when the order is given us 'Prepare to attack,' and we fix bayonets and with the fateful cry of '*Savoia*' we throw ourselves on the enemy like so many cannon balls, and we rout him, we force him to flight, and we take his position. It seems as though this were a good way to make tenants change houses!"

. . . .

The soldier Giulio Papucci thus writes to his sister:—

"Bravo! How patriotic my Gianna is! But thy brother is not less so, thou knowest me already, thou knowest how I hate the Austrians and how I longed for this war. Yes, dear Giovanna, we sons of Italy will be the avengers of those who fell gloriously, contending against the Austro-German hordes; that their standards may be overthrown; that their banners bathed in Latin blood may wave no more over the hills of Trent and Trieste!

"Rest assured that thy brother will die, but that he will never take one step backwards; that he will not become

cowardly, and that he will not do less than his duty in the face of the Austro-German hordes.

"Thou desirest, dear, to know where we are and what we are doing. Of that which we do we know little, that is to say, we know only what is around us, while you, reading the papers, know more than we. We can tell nothing of that which is happening. Thou sayest that God does not wish that I should be here in front of the Austrians. Why? How could I give vent to my hatred if I could not confront them? If also poor *Babbo* returns victorious, his blood runs in my veins, and if he were not a coward, neither can I be one. But if my fate is to die, so be it. Remember:—'*Chi per la patria muor vissuto è assai!*' And be thou proud in knowing that thy brother died in doing his sacred duty. Be brave for Mamma."

The marvellous audacity of two Sicilian soldiers:—

"*June* 1915.

"In a certain part of the slopes of Monte Nero, where the battle raged more fiercely every day, the trenches of the Italians were only a few score metres from those of the Austrians. These were armoured with iron plates in which were holes for the machine-guns and the rifles. In the intervals of repose, the most violent apostrophes were exchanged between one party and another, almost always provoked by the Austrians who insulted our men with murderous epithets.

"Some days ago, these angry disputes assumed at one moment a tremendous sharpness. The Austrians from their armed shelter derisively invited our men to come on. Then two Sicilian soldiers, in a transport of rage, escaped

the watchfulness of their superiors, leaped like lions from their trench and rushed against the hated offenders. Immediately there broke out a fierce firing from both sides. The two Italians arrived unharmed at the Austrian trench, pushed the barrels of their guns into the holes and discharged all their cartridges. But one of them fell, hit in the face; the other took the body of his companion on his shoulders, and succeeded in bringing it back to our own trenches.

"This episode was cited in the order of the day, and both of these audacious soldiers, the one who had fallen and the one who survived, were proposed for the medal of valour."

. . . .

The following letter from an Alpino is so full of gaiety and a bright spirit of cheerfulness and courage that it must be given in part:—

"Thou shouldest see what a fine life we lead on the outposts! The locality is majestic. At more than two thousand metres of altitude the Alpino breathes his own air. We have had two nights of snow, and it is very cold, but we have enjoyed even this novelty. The place is high and steep: and from this height we keep watch. Great vigilance—especially at night. Stationed up and down, crouching behind rocks, we are ready for any surprise. Like a guardian angel, the light of our fort, which is of a thousand candle power, illuminates all the valley like day, searches the crests occupied by the enemy, shines into the gorges, investigates, inch by inch, the moraines and the snowfields; then disappears, leaving us in a darkness which for us, however, holds nothing of fear. They come, if they have the courage; the 168 'pills' which we have with us will find their billets.

"In the morning we retire from the exposed positions into our trench-redoubt, and we assist in the usual firing from our fort, and from those Austrians at the scouting patrols which offer a good target. My platoon, the other day, had its share; but by good fortune without serious consequences. While the Austrian caramels were falling over us, we had still presence of mind to shout, for a joke, to our adversaries, 'Higher! . . . To the right! . . . A little further ahead! . . .' and in the meantime we made resounding explosions of shrapnel and shells. The shells are the most terrible, because they blow up on contact with the ground, and if they fall in the midst of a group of soldiers, they make havoc. The shrapnel, instead, is sent out by an apparatus which makes it explode in the air at a height, and then one sees it rain down at every shot more than five hundred red-hot metal balls, which make a fine havoc on their arrival.

"We Alpini, however, have the fortune that at every danger our officer shouts, 'To your posts!' and then, 'Take cover'; no one is to be seen. Every rock is a shelter. With one's 'love' (the gun) under one's arm, one fears nothing. I am more careful of my gun than of my old body. I keep it well cleaned and oiled. It is worth more to me than any beautiful young lady.

"*Apropos* of my 'old body,' I have forgotten to say that I am in the best of health, thank God. Now I have become accustomed to sleep without taking off my belt, and to pass whole weeks without taking off my jacket or my shoes, and to lead a life contrary in all respects to that of the *viveur!* The *viveur* goes to bed at three in the morning, and we instead begin our work precisely at three, as the sky begins to brighten. The *viveur* gets up at eleven, and we, at eleven, take our three hours of rest. He has no

appetite, and has to take medicines and piquant *hors-d'œuvres*,—and we devour with the hunger of wolves our simple rations and our loaf of bread, washed down with water from the brook (for here we have no more wine), and instead of ices we take . . . a big piece of snow. The life of a King, my dear!—*June 28th*, 1915."

How many pictures of their life these soldiers give in the letters written home from the mountain front. Here is a glimpse of the Alpini again:—

"Be happy, then, in knowing that we are all well and in the best of spirits, and that we have a wild desire to imitate our most brave Alpini, who, in order to surprise two of the enemy's battalions, climbed up by the precipices, without shoes, their feet wrapped in pieces of cloth, and went on for seven hours in that manner over the rocks of the mountain.—*June 23rd*, 1915."

Of the same date:—

"Yesterday, one of the companies sent to come up on the flank of a mountain had recourse to a curious stratagem to help their advance. The soldiers, standing out against the snow, were an easy mark for the enemy. To prevent this the patrols were dressed in white, putting on over their uniforms a pair of drawers and a shirt. When they were not walking over the snow, they looked like ghosts.

"While I write to thee, I am on one of the advanced posts. In front of us extends the glacier, white and majestic, on which, during the past days, when they were not put to flight by the noise of the cannon, we frequently saw chamois."

A Bersagliere of Bergamo, belonging to the 12th Regiment, in one of his letters to his family, describes the battle in which his colonel, De Rossi, fell wounded and Lieutenant-Colonel Negrotto met his death:—

"BERGAMO, 24*th June*.

"We have had our colonel wounded, and our lieutenant-colonel killed. I had the honour to be among those who carried them out of the firing line. . . . The former was seriously wounded in the arm and left side, and the other struck dead by a shot in his breast. . . . I had been crouching behind some sandbags which served as a cover, and had opened fire from between them on the enemy, who, from time to time, disturbed by the artillery fire, were forced to shift their positions. My colonel had been going up and down the front encouraging my companions to come along by his words and his example: and he had stopped directly behind me, a few steps away, giving orders and advice with marvellous calmness and serenity. His voice was strong and manly, and was heard through all the noise, his short, dry orders were directed to the right and to the left, and were executed without any hesitation. He was contented with the conduct of his Bersaglieri in the face of the enemy's fire. The balls were whistling violently over our heads and very thickly, it seemed as though they stopped and made a whirlwind around him. Notwithstanding our entreaties that he would place himself in safety, he remained erect, bold, and fine to see, fearlessly defying death.

"He exposed himself too long, however, to the enemy's fire. A sudden cry from the Bersaglieri caused us to turn, and we saw our colonel on the ground, holding his hand to

his left side. We were at his side instantly, and we surrounded him to protect him from the shots which still were falling furiously everywhere, and a stretcher coming up, we laid him on it and transported him to the nearest dressing station. Before leaving the field of honour he lifted his plumed hat, and waved it, crying, '*Bravi, Bersaglieri*, forward still.' Then he took the white feather from the plume (his distinguishing mark as commander of the regiment) and placed it over his heart, and kept it there until he reached the infirmary.

"How very sad for me and for all the regiment to lose our colonel."

. . . .

Another letter follows from one of the soldiers who was among the first to place his foot on the "unredeemed territory." This was Renato Orsi, and he writes to his brother-in-law, a major in the Royal Carabinieri:—

"Dearest Ugo,—I am very well in health and in good spirits. Now we are in an important city on the coast which we took by a fortunate attack a few days ago. The Austrians tried to resist us and were of course treacherous in their methods, but these were of no avail. The Italians will not stop even in face of all the armies of Franz Joseph. He has called us cowards, the obstinate old man, but we will show him which of the two armies is cowardly.

"The population is awaiting us with open arms, because it knows that we are bringing food and a banner which is the symbol of liberty and brotherhood. Here one already breathes more freely. It seems as though the air were purer and the sea more blue. The shadow of the wing of the double-headed eagle hangs no longer over this land, and

the yellow and black flag waves no more. In these villages our three symbolical colours now wave, pure and bright. And this flag which is the symbol of our country, which recalls to us our glories and our sufferings, our far-away homes, our mothers, our sisters, the people who await our victorious return, this banner for which we are willing to sacrifice anything, encourages us and urges us forward to new and more ardent adventures. We will make all sacrifice, give everything to the *Patria*, so that she may be victorious, and that our glorious flag may float over the towers of Trieste, which we can see from this height; we are happy to give everything for that, even our life. Pure it has been left to us by our fathers, and pure we must leave it to our children.

"We know that there they expect us as brothers who have long been holding out their arms, who desire nothing so much as our fraternal embrace, who have a thirst for all things Italian, and who have suffered and are still suffering because they wish to call themselves Italian. From there they see and hear that we are near, and we must go. The thought that from there they can see the tricolour is alone enough to urge us on. And we hear their prayer, and we are going to free them and bring them the greetings of all Italy. We are bringing with us the blessings of our families, the will of the people, the faith of victory, the spirit of our heroes. We must and shall conquer, we must get there and, whether the enemy likes it or not, we shall get there.—*June* 13, 1915."

. . . .

A young corporal writes to his father in this same month of June:—

"Dearest Papa,—Our work of digging trenches for

defence goes on with alacrity and we all without distinction work with enthusiasm and fervour. Young men who were nearly ready to take their diplomas as students, clerks, business men, artisans, all, with dexterity and ability are using the pick and shovel in an astonishing manner: they seem to be already old hands at the work.

"I, too, am armed with a strong shovel, and I assure thee that I hold it in affection. In this our common task, we are all animated by one thought, the country for whose greatness and defence we are striving and suffering.

"The little village which offers us hospitality is situated on a smiling hillside, and is about twelve hundred metres above sea-level. From this point we completely command the long valleys.

"Seven or eight kilometres away we see the old confines. It is there that our gaze is directed: in stormy and tempestuous days, we look ahead and we think of our brothers and companions, and we say, 'Those, indeed, are the ones who suffer.'—Thine, BRUNO."

Two extracts from very brave letters:—

"Thou tellest me that Giustino and all of you are praying that the war may cease. I will do so too, but only when Italy, my dear *Patria*, shall have raised her tricolour on the hills of Trent and on S. Giusto in Trieste. If you were those who had given me life, you would feel the same way. What indeed are we? Italians and Bersaglieri, or cowards? Have we blood or milk in our veins?"

. . . .

From a corporal of the 57th Infantry, Michele Cosentino, who is annoyed and distressed because his mother continually writes to him not to

expose himself too much, and says that at home they are all weeping for him:—

"I wish that you would not repeat such stories," he says, "for I am not a boy any longer, I am of an age when I can take care of myself in any danger. Therefore in the letters which you send me I do not want to hear any more about weeping, nor of gloomy impressions, I want to hear you say that you are happy that I am under arms. I came back from America precisely because I wished to serve the *Patria*, and I am very content.—*June 12th*, 1915."

. . . .

From the "*terre redente*":—

"It is an infernal night: lightning and rain, thunder and cannonading will not let me sleep. I tried to sleep in a stable, where we are staying temporarily before going on: but in vain, a hen came to scratch in the straw near my head, and I decided to get up, find what was necessary and write. We work very hard, dear Ermanno. With a rapidity which would stupefy one who had not seen our soldiers at work, one sees the roads bordered by rows of palings on which is stretched light wire: and on the machines and on the roofs and underground, wire threads everywhere.

"So we go on from one village to another with our wire, while over our heads pass the Austrian shells with an angry hissing. This life would be interesting enough, if in every village where we go we did not find such misery. Poor Italian villages, how they have suffered! One never sees a man, only some woman with a face which, though haggard and pale, is cheered in these days, looks out from a doorway and smiling on us murmurs: 'Bless you!' and in that smile shows us all her gratitude, and while she speaks

her eyes turn towards a faded tricolour, which after many years of hiding in the bottom of a trunk, waves to-day triumphantly under the burning June sunlight.

"To eat, to drink, or to smoke there is nothing. It is useless to search in the ex-imperial tobacconist's shops, you would not find even a cigar end; and it is useless to talk about eating. These poor people have nothing but a little maize and such bread that one's conscience would be remorseful in giving it to a dog. . . .

"I work hard, but in the evening when I ask myself whether I have done my duty an inward voice tells me 'Yes,' and I am satisfied, and I go to sleep (if there is time) tranquilly, and I promise myself that I will do even more, and I do not doubt but that the opportunity will come when I may do much more.—*June* 22, 1915."

Here is a letter of quite another type, that of a Florentine cabman accustomed to night duty. As all sorts of men are together in this common service of their country, it is interesting to read the views of all:—

"*June* 28, 1915.

"Dearest C——,—How meagre life is here. One must work hard and make very little; it would have been better if I had brought my taximeter (with all these kilometres).

"It is now twenty days since we entered Austrian territory, and we are still going ahead on foot; think of it, when I was down there, I took the tram to go even to Piazza Cavour. Sons of dogs, they might have put one even up here, or did not these Germans know that we were not accustomed to walk much?

"It is enough that we are advancing: if I should see

dear Alfred when we enter some village already occupied by our troops, what airs I shall give myself, even like *Guglielmone* (pardon me, I forgot that I am without a moustache), and I shall strut ahead to make the population see what kind of men Italy has.

"With how much dislike the people look at us, especially the women, who know that we are going out against their husbands or their lovers,—though that is not our fault, they are sending us. What is needed here is to have good judgment, for the people are traitors, and some of our companions have paid with their lives for their inattention.

"Our superiors have advised us to be very careful and not to go about alone, we must not even ask for a glass of water, but I shall try to go into some safe shop and drink wine only.

"Several days ago I went into a house to look for some eggs, and a little man presented himself, and I told him what I wanted. He did not understand, or pretended that he did not, and he said '*Ja, Ja!*' However, I made out that he was inviting me to enter most politely, but I gave him clearly to understand that fresh air was good for me and that I preferred to remain outside.

"Seeing that the affair was becoming rather long and fearing that he might not be alone, I got a little angry and speaking very distinctly I said: 'Look here, my gallant gentleman, don't annoy me too much, or I will make you see Oscar dance' (and here I pointed to my gun), and, to make a short story of it, he must have understood, for he brought me the eggs in a moment, and I left.

"We also have orders that if we find any suspicious-looking civilians, to arrest them, because there are some of them who in the night make signals to the enemy; you can imagine that we keep a sharp look-out; it is to our own

advantage, and if I should find even Buscema, I would arrest even him.

"The war on our front has not begun badly, and let us hope that it will keep on well. We have been in the trenches several times, and there the bullets whistle finely, and I, when I have heard some ball near me, have said: 'Be careful, young fellows . . . for I have arranged with Gensini to return and drive a four-in-hand, and when I have promised a thing I like to perform it, true men act like that, so you others must do the same.'

"I will not write any more now. If you like to answer me I shall be pleased, and I send you many salutations.—Your affectionate friend, IL NOTTAMBULO" (the Night Rambler).

The next letter is from a soldier of Galluzzo, a little place near Florence. It was written in June 1915:—

"DEAR MEMMO,—I sent thee a postcard which I hope was received, it is only now that I am able to write a letter and give thee my news, for we have been short of paper.

"I am very well in health as I hope thou art, and all thy family; I do not deny that the fatigue is great, but when the cause for which one contends is just, as this is, one feels nothing. Believe me, Memmo, we must be satisfied with the operations now being developed, for our soldiers know well how to act before an enemy who sometimes is so despicable, so very vile, for the Austrian soldier lies hidden to deceive our men, and when they make an attack he very often flees without giving battle: these tallow eaters who are at the service of a hangman who has

strangled many voices only because they have cried '*Viva l'Italia.*'

"What a pity it is that those grand heroes of the *Risorgimento* are not living to-day! Why is not he living again to-day, he who with the motto of 'God and the people' preached liberty and redemption to the people, and first predicted the unification of Italy and the driving out of the barbarians! I speak of our master. But man is not eternal here, the time of his mission is brief, the mission which he has left as a heritage to us. Those great ones did even too much in that period, leaving to us all a bequest which we to-day must make respected. If they could have lived, if on this earth Mazzini with his burning words, Garibaldi with his bravery could return, then the Austrians would have been less audacious, but to-day that matters nothing. Their audacity is of no account.

"Meanwhile the Italian phalanx advances; for more than a half century we have struggled, we have dreamed, but now it is enough! The hour of redemption has sounded, and until we have freed all the lands from the yoke of the hangman we will not turn back; then only shall I be proud that I have listened to that symbolic cry of civilisation, and that I, too, have taken part in this just cause.

". . . I ask thee to salute all my friends, and tell them that I have not time to write to each one separately, but that they are always in my thoughts. . . .—Affectionate greetings from thy friend, GIOVANNI CASTELLANI."

"*June* 29, 1915.

". . . A day of repose. It is raining, the water drips steadily on to the top of the tent, and what an inconceivable pleasure it would be if one could sleep. Do you remember Tibullus? Oh how sweet to follow '*imbre invante*

somnum!' I wake instead,—and to dream I have no need to sleep: I return to the well-known streets, I ascend the familiar stairs, I see the faces I know, I hear the accustomed voices, and with you I, too, cry Italy and Victory, and with you I also read aloud the magnificent inscription at Udine.[1] What a consolation to feel myself surrounded daily by the affection of so many generous hearts, amongst which the most generous is yours! Superb bridge of affection which unites Italy, which supports Italy as she rises high and still higher, and goes far up those heights which God and Nature give to her, until the morning dawns which shall crown her victorious, even though stained red with the blood shed by the abhorred hand of the Hapsburgs.

"Of myself what shall I say? I am content and calm as I await the events which Fate has ordered. I am in camp in the midst of a thick wood on the side of a mountain near the first line. Last night it was my duty to make an inspection of my sentinels. I was moved to tears, for not far away in the thicket a nightingale was singing. The song was so melancholy and sweet that it awakened in me an acute sense of home-sickness!

"But otherwise I am in an enviable condition, especially of health. I am tanned by the sun, I have a beard which

[1] The inscription at Udine to which the above reference is made is one that dates from the liberation of that city in 1866, when the seven northern provinces, Venice and the others, were given back to Italy. It is as follows:—

"Custodi al varco—Aperto un giorno alle armi stranieri—Oggi stanno i petti friulani—E dietro ad essi—L'Italia una."

("Guard the pass—Once open to the alien's arms—To-day protected by the breast of the Friulians—And behind them—One Italy.")

Friuli is the province of which Udine is the principal city, and Italy knows no braver hearts than theirs.

threatens to reach my knees, and I consume an extraordinary amount of the munitions of the mouth; the other kind of munitions, also generous in quantity, I am reserving for bodies of quite another sort. May the time soon come for the distribution of these latter. Don't you agree?

"Happy and well (the mountain air, the summer-time; what more would you have?), happy and well are all the soldiers also. Very few of them are ever out of sorts. And they adapt themselves to all sorts of work. Wherever they stop, the aspect of the place changes in one day: trees are cut down, the ground is cleared, trenches are dug, hidden wire entanglements are stretched, paths are laid out. Here where we are encamped in the woods we have made a beautiful clear space for meetings (*Piazza Trentina*), and a wide main road (*via Trento e Trieste*) and good paths leading to the trenches, to the posts of the sentries and to the tents. Avenues, believe me, like those in the Cascine, a true Bois de Boulogne! And on a layer of dry leaves and scented ferns how magnificently one sleeps and how magnificently dreams!

"When your occupations permit it, do not forget me, my dear Professor. And I, too, will write when I can . . . for you know that I remember you always with the greatest affection. . . .—MARIO MARGHERI."

The Bersaglieri are very much dreaded by the Austrian troops and the soldiers are afraid to fall into their hands. Yet their reputation among the enemy is not justified by their actions when there is need of help and sympathy, as the following letter shows. It is from a sergeant of the 12th battalion of bicyclists:—

"Yesterday during a fight I made an Austrian soldier

prisoner. Though wounded, he took to flight, abandoning his gun. I found him hidden under some casks in the cellar of a house; a dark streak of blood served to help me find him.

"With the help of my companion, I lifted him up from the place where he was found, and together we laid him on a little waggon which we found near there, and brought him to the dressing station. He had two gun-shot wounds, one of which had broken his right arm above the wrist, while the other had gone through the left; they will certainly have to amputate the right arm. Poor fellow! it made me feel very sorry; but, on the other hand, war is war and we must do our duty. He was decorated with a cross; he had gained it in Serbia. On seeing us, he showed signs of alarm, then seeing our honesty he thanked us; he knew a few words of Italian; he told us that they had a terrible fear of the Bersaglieri, insomuch that they have given us the nickname of 'black devils.'—*June 28th*, 1915."

. . . .

Mario Spesso of the artillery to his "dearest mother":—

"*June* 23, 1915.

"I wish thou couldst see how like a big family we are here, all helping one another. One jokes, one dances, one plays, all are doing what they can. We have become babies for the second time; but when the moment for firing comes, each one is ready at his post with firmness and courage. If it were not that from time to time the salute of some enemy shell arrives, we should not think that we were in war. Many of them come every day with effect. Not one man of our battery has been wounded. The day before yesterday, while I was eating my ration by the

kitchen, one shell fell very near me, and another at five metres' distance, sending all the pots into the air and making a big hole in the ground. It was a pure chance that I escaped unharmed. A strong dose of impressions, and then nothing more, and we went on eating our rations. It was worse for my companions, who, instead of broth, were obliged to content themselves with eating bread and meat from tins.

"We have been taking a 'cure' of cherries: I wish thou couldest see how many of them there are, and all fine and big.

"And thou, Mamma, how art thou? I imagine thy agitation and anxiety for me, but what wouldst thou have us do? This is my destiny. I want to have thee keep happy, and not to think of too many things: thy Mario loves thee so much that he does not know how to express it. He always thinks lovingly of thee, and especially now when he feels the need to embrace thee and to give thee a proof of his love, which is so great.—MARIO."

. . . .

From a Bersagliere, Manfroni Renato:—

"*June 30th*, 1915.

"No one, my dear, who has not been to the front can form any idea, or not more than an approximate one, of the spectacle which the war presents. In the same moment one is amazed and terrified, or one exults and is filled with a mad courage. No matter to what degree my mind may be reasonable and firm, it is not possible to maintain an unaltering and deep faith always. There come moments in which the delays, the waiting, the precautionary measures give the impression that things are going badly for us; one feels oneself to be weaker than the enemy;

then one feels a need to be reassured that one's courage has not become weakened, that one's physical and moral force are always superior. The Italian is made so, to go forward, always forward!

"Why do we not go ahead? We ask it at every rest, at every delay. One knows the war is murderous, one may die. Very well, he will live who is to live, and who is to die will die. But let us hurry, for we want to conquer, we want to return home victorious, where they are waiting for us and suffering. Are there forts up there? Let us take them by assault. But shall we all die? And behind us are there not the reserves? Forward, *per Dio!* The war goes like that.

"But among so many there are also some who know how to reason. 'He who commands us understands more than we boys. We perhaps speak selfishly, for the sooner we act the less we suffer, but the commanders have grave responsibility, very grave. . . .' And so we all agree to be reasonable: we gain faith again, we are convinced that we are being well guided, and our joy is intense. So passes our life. One would like to know everything, to have news from all the fronts, to hear from our homes and our dear ones."

CHAPTER IV

HIGH SUMMER AT THE FRONT—SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AND PRIESTS

On bivouac at the front:—

"*July* 1915.

"Starlight, starlight of paradise. This is the second night that we are here, and we are told that it will be the last.

"'The last, but how? Are we to die or to advance?'

"The question was put to me before he crept back under the tent by a young soldier of barely eighteen years, a volunteer, blonde and slender.

"I answered that one of the two words had as much value as the other, and that one of the two things was inevitable. He hung his head, as though ashamed that he had not thought of the answer to the problem himself, and disappeared under the tent of the corps of sentinels to which he belonged.

"Our position, high, with rocky turrets, at the top of a hill which dominates the Valley of ——, was taken by a company of our glorious Bersaglieri, who left us, a sacred heritage of love, three of their dead. We buried them to-day, proudly kissing their hands, their clothing, their faces.

"Here, where we have pitched our tents, the air seems full of this glory to which we aspire. We have been here for two days, in an unquiet and disturbed bivouac. The

enemy is at a distance, but he sends out spies in advance, through the thick wire barrier, and in spite of the watchfulness of the outlying sentries. They hide and fire from beneath every shadow. During last night, more than one discharge startled the hearts and bodies of our soldiers. One sentinel had his hand torn in the dark, without seeing from whence the shot came. He fired, too, bathing his gun with blood.

"These spies are civilians, bought and corrupted, smugglers, who know underground passages, and paths on which every tree has been made, for some time past, a base of supplies. The soldiers, however, laugh at them. They have as much effect against our men as flies attacking a giant, and the soldiers laugh at them. They are not afraid of them.

"These nights on bivouac, while we keep awake and watch, are almost gay. Under the scattered tents, in the deep nights, the silence of refreshing sleep is rare. One hears whispers alternating with suppressed laughs; the young hearts of the soldiers are always ready for some joke, even in the hours when they should be sleeping. For whole weeks sleep has become a luxury. Yesterday, one of the men said to me, 'If I could have killed at least a couple of them, then I could sleep more tranquilly.'

"He who is far away, or he who is able to judge the mind of the Italians by reading the bulletins, a skeleton outline merely of hundreds of wonderful and often obscure deeds of bravery, cannot understand what poetry, what enthusiasm, what affection one feels living even one hour, as a soldier, among soldiers. These are things which can never be forgotten. In times of rest, on bivouac, more than in any other circumstances, one feels the heart expand and beat more strongly. In this kind of watchful repose,

more wearing than actual bodily fatigue, an intense longing takes precedence of all other preoccupations, one forgets the time of waiting, and the patriotic soul of the Italian is inflamed and his heart moved by sensations which nothing can change.

"Under the canvas, five, six men, have but one heart. If a soldier of the number is absent on a certain night, because he is on guard, it is a piece of them all who is standing out there, gazing fearlessly into the terrible darkness; it is a piece of them all who stands out at the front to say: Make room, Italy passes!

"Italy passes, indeed! Not more than a month ago, these places were being passed over by the heavy Austrian cavalry. If I look at the stars overhead, as they sparkle, it seems to me impossible that they could have shone with such brilliancy for them, on land held by stealth.

"Yesterday, on our way here, we had to pass some Austrian barracks, high, cold, and bare, covered with long inscriptions in Gothic letters, which rendered them still more unpleasant. And with what joy have we seen these letters scratched out and have helped still further to erase them! It seemed like scratching the parchment face of some Austrian territorial! And what even greater joy must have been experienced by the Bersaglieri who, before they occupied this building, wrote across the façade, directly over the erased words, in letters long and large: '*Regio Esercito Italiano. Caserma Lamarmora.*' And then over the entrance, made of plaster, with art rude yet full of life, such as the sappers of the regiment always possess, the beautiful coat-of-arms of the Bersaglieri. Ah! passing before it, and regarding this building, it seemed to me as though it was all alight with the flame of that coat-of-arms, thrown into the plaster with fire in its veins. And may

that bugle of theirs which is so characteristic fill the valleys with its prophetic fanfare, with its conquering rhythm.

"It is a sound other than that one longs for in the moments in which the spirit nurses something of homesickness, of desire. It is the sound of a bell. I felt this last night while I was walking about in the thick wood, inspecting the guard, in a silence which almost made one afraid.

"From ——, eleven and three quarters rang out. The sound came to me, distinct, harmonious as it had never seemed to me before. Then I heard it no more, though the time passed. The wind had perhaps changed in direction. Oh, the sweet, the delicate impression! How many times in the country this harmony passes almost unnoticed, often in a city disturbs us or does not reach our ears! It seems a caress, the voice of a person beloved, a word of our own language coming to us in the confusion of strange tongues.

"A corporal who was with me could not restrain an abrupt 'Listen!' almost a cry of joy, and on his face I am sure that, if I could have seen it, I should have distinguished a smile of emotion.

"He who has his spirit hardened by fatigues and privations and hard efforts keeps closely guarded and is silent in regard to the jewels he holds most dear. 'Does that sound affect you?' I inquired. 'No, no,' he answered quickly, 'so small a thing!' I was silent, and he had lied. And perhaps he was wrong. The soul, in keeping itself strong and noble, should be rich in certain weaknesses, in certain gentle things. If all the soldiers of the encampment, who had heard that sound, should have run to the village church in their thoughts, and from thence to their homes, to the hearth, to the mother, the wife, or to the

beloved with the blonde hair, to all those things which we unjustly relegate to the *scartafaccia rosa*, they would not have acted badly. Is it not for these things that we are here? Is it not that we may return to them with renewed heart, with our heads held high, and a stronger and wider knowledge? Are not these things the perfume which sweetens violent and murderous deeds?

"No, we should not fear to cherish certain thoughts. One hour later, last night itself, a shrill whistle struck the air, then another, and still others. Firing. If any of these thoughts might have tarried a little in the mind, still caressing it, and perhaps bringing tears with it, this hissing of balls would have put them speedily to flight. And how they would have been made to fly! In three minutes, no more, we were awake and on our feet. But we heard nothing more, and nothing more happened.

. . . .

"The dawn found us all still awake, and they told me that something, the usual thing, had occurred. A scout with a smuggler had insinuated himself into the sentinel's lines. Surprised, he had fired, they had answered, killing him. The other, after having let off three shots from his murderous rifle, succeeded in saving his life amongst the precipitous rocks which fall down to the valley. The sentinel who was the first to reply was struck. *Ahimè!* I had seen him this morning, and I could not keep back my tears: for he died two hours afterwards.

"It was the little young soldier, the volunteer, slender and blonde, who had asked me, 'The last night, but how? To die or to advance?'"

. . . .

The soldier Dante Agnolucci writes the follow-

ing letter, describing his experiences in the Cadore during these early days of the war:—

"In the name of a group of Florentine soldiers I am writing a little to tell you how life goes on here in the mountains of Cadore.

"It was a cloudy morning with a dim light from the moon when we took the road towards V——, from whence a lieutenant had sent asking for reinforcements.

"We, who had been encamped at ——, on the receipt of this message, which had been brought by a man on a bicycle, at once took down our tents, loaded our knapsacks, and started off.

"We were happy and joyful as we went along. The group of Florentines, who were in advance, encouraged their other companions, saying: 'Come on, boys, soon we shall confront the men who have oppressed our brothers.'

"And so we covered the road in a rapid march. From all sides one heard, 'Push on, comrades, this is the moment of glory. It is the moment in which the Italian soldier must show his bravery and his strength against the enemy and the oppressor. Forward always.'

"At last we reached the spot where our companions were awaiting us with anxiety. A fierce fight began. The enemy, when they saw such a mass of people coming against them with savage fury, took to precipitous flight, in such a manner that after a few hours we were occupying their position.

"Our hearts were filled with immense contentment at having made this conquest. The night passed tranquilly, a little cold, it is true, but we endured that with cheerfulness and gaiety. In the morning they aimed at us with their artillery, but without any result.

"We remember one phrase which the Germans employed in their papers, that the Italians were 'mandolin players.' And now we are showing them what fine players we are at putting them to flight and inflicting heavy losses upon them.

"And so forward, ever forward to victory."

. . . .

Among the many provocations and annoyances which stirred up the wrath and the fighting spirit of the advancing Italians were the outrageous lies told about them by the Austrian authorities. The proclamation which follows gives an example of these inventions. It was affixed to the wall of one of the barracks where Hungarian troops had been quartered. Printed in Italian it was later admired by the Italian staff who had occasion to pass it:—

"BRAVE TROOPS!

"An army of vagabonds has dared to pass over our frontier.

"SOLDIERS!

"The most traitorous act of history has been committed to our loss, but our revenge will be equal to it. Fear nothing: soon you will see your enemies, half of them dressed as soldiers and half as civilians. You will be able to enjoy their awkwardness with great hilarity. Hundreds and hundreds of prisoners have been made, and more than one of them said that he had not eaten anything for days. Officers and entire troops are surrendering from fright.

"Such as these are your foes! Destroy them as you would destroy venomous and vile reptiles! Soon you will

be able to measure yourselves with them, and you will see how ten Hungarians are worth one hundred Italians. Be strong and in a few weeks you shall return loaded with honours.

"Long live the Emperor! Hungary for ever!

"THE COMMANDANT."

And here follows a letter which tells the other side of the story. This is from a soldier, a workman of Grassina, near Florence, who writes frequently to his uncle and aunt who have brought him up:—

"*June 26th*, 1915.

"It is true that the first firing of the cannon made a slight impression on me, but now I do not think any more about it, and I feel as though I were looking at a display of fireworks. Every evening I am on sentry duty in the trenches, but I go always with courage and confidence, and even though I have to stay there all night you may rest assured that there is no danger of my sleeping, but I have my eyes and my mind wide awake, with my hand always on my friendly gun, ready to fire at any moment.

"The enemy are afraid of us; however, when the big guns have razed their two or three forts, which do not permit us to sleep (not because we are afraid, but because of the noise), we shall make a fine advance, going forward to find the *signori austriaci!* and show them that we have no fear of them.

"Every day some soldiers desert and come over to join us, and you should see how hungry they are, and how they eat two or three loaves at a time, cheering for us soldiers and calling us brothers. They are *Trentini*, and they cry

'*Viva l'Italia*,' and they are right for they speak Italian like us.

"You see, then, that this war is holy and just, because it seeks to liberate and to have revenge on the vile Germans who have made so many martyrs. Let us hope that I may return, but if it should be that I must fall on the field of honour, do not weep for me, and if I am perhaps only wounded, I will return glorious and triumphant to your arms, happy and content to have fulfilled my sacred duty."

. . . .

Here are some other expressions of Italian opinion in regard to the Austrians and their own part in the war.

Gaetano Ulivi of Siena, an artillery captain, writes the following letter to his brother:—

"Yesterday I passed over the ancient boundary line, and I find myself in a spot from which I can see flowing before me the waters I have longed to see, our river of the Isonzo. The roar of cannon is unceasing, and very shortly I shall unite to their roar the voice of my pieces. I have a mad desire to begin! This grand battle is turning out splendidly for us!

"This redeemed land is beautiful and fertile; pretty and clean villages inhabited now only by women and children.

"Poor people full of astonishment to find us kind, since we had been described to them as savage beasts!

"I am longing to have the satisfaction, which would be immense, of being among the first to enter beautiful Trieste. If fate is kind, I hope that my fair dream may be realised.

"Remember me to A——, and kiss the little Julia; remember me always, and on my return I shall be able to

tell thee many things which are forbidden at present, splendid things which will make thee still more proud, proud and glad that thou art an Italian."

. . . .

". . . At three o'clock in the morning, fifty of us soldiers left our camp for a reconnaissance, and guided by our lieutenant we advanced towards the enemy's front. After two hours of marching in the mountains the sun rose slowly, warming the backs of all the soldiers in such a way that not long after sunrise we stopped a moment to gain more energy for the task. At the point where we rested there rose a little house, protected by the green branches of the wood, and at the door of that solitary house appeared a woman, at the sight of whom I remained for an instant without moving: she seemed to me truly a vision of my mother! She was a woman of about forty years old, rather pale, of medium height, and her face was deeply wrinkled: I swear that if I had found her in the neighbourhood of Scarperia [his home] I should have said that she was my mother!

"I hesitated a moment, but desirous of speaking to that sweet vision, I approached her and asked for a glass of water. That good mother, at my request, ran to the house, and in a moment came back with a cup of water, saying: 'Do not drink much while thou art so tired; it would not be good for thee'—and as though my mother had given me this advice, I obeyed her. This woman, noticing that I looked at her very closely, in her turn regarded me, and her pleasant smile showed one that she was a good mother of a family!

"Meanwhile an hour passed and we had resumed our march.

"After twenty minutes along a footpath, I slipped with my right foot and struck my left knee against a stone. The wound was slight, but the pain was very acute! The sergeant noticed me and asked whether I had hurt myself. I answered, 'No,' but meanwhile the pain interfered with my going on. He immediately spoke to the lieutenant, and without any further words he gave me permission to turn back. The road was very long, and my hope was to go back to that good woman. Arrived again at her house, she saw me, and was surprised at my return, and asked me what had happened, and I explained everything.

"She hastened to make me sit down, giving me all the care necessary. She had with her two little children of the age of six or seven years, who, during the short time I stopped, took, one of them, my gun, the other putting my cap on his head; one brought me a handful of strawberries, the other held the string which served to tie the bandage, while the mother was binding up my knee. Soon the pain began to lessen gradually, and the little family were adoring me as one of the true liberators of —— from the 'stranger' to whom they had been so long subjugated.

"God had indeed willed that I should be allowed to go back and to see that perfect resemblance to my mother! In those two hours I had such joy that I scarcely felt the pain.

"It was ten in the morning when I decided to take my departure, bidding farewell and warmly thanking that blessed woman, with slow steps I took the mule path which led towards our trenches.

"The morning after there was no more pain in the wounded knee, only the scar. . . .—FEDERIGO."

. . . .

The two letters above are taken from the corre-

spondence of Federigo Margheri, a corporal of the 84th Infantry. He is a simple workman, a mason, but a good soldier and a devoted son. With but a limited education, his letters are full of fine thoughts, and his affection for his family is of the strongest. Because he is a fine type of a good, faithful class of citizens, these letters are quoted here. They perfectly express ideas of fidelity to duty, an uncomplaining patience, and a quiet heroism, which go far towards bringing victory. In addition to these letters it is interesting to read also a few words from a letter which he sent to his "dearest friends"—

"Dearest ones, from the moment when I left my never-to-be-forgotten village, the distance ever increases: more than eight hundred kilometres separate me from my mother in the most brilliant moment of my life, in the moment in which her son could help his parents. But the mother Italy too has need of her sons, and all united under the splendid tricolour we have hurried to her defence. I still remember the day on which I left. I abandoned the paternal home, my mother weeping for my sad departure; my father immersed in grief, pressed my hand, repeating many times: 'Write soon!' . . . Besides the family I left behind many other persons like you whom I have known and with whom I have played.

"Duty however called me and I had to go. Now I am with thousands of Italy's sons who are fighting for the liberty of a civilised race of people who like us speak Italian, and who for a long time have been waiting for our strong hand to unite them to their mother Italy. The hour is come. On the faces of these good people one reads a smile of joy,

a sincere expression which shows what weary suffering must have been theirs under the stranger's yoke.

"Here all without distinction love the Italian soldiers, even to the smallest child whom one encounters on the road: he stops when the troops are passing, and one notices that he has already learned to make a military salute. One must not forget either the young ladies who are really mad to wear military badges, stars, or buttons, or even the feathers from the hats of the Alpini and the Bersaglieri: I am without the stars on my mantle because I made a present of them to a pretty contadina.

"Life in war is certainly not too agreeable, but neither is it too dreadful after all. We have many beautiful and happy moments as we go about, seeing things which we have never seen before, or firing from time to time on those enemies who dare to show themselves. . . ."

. . . .

A young man named Giorgio, from Imola, writes this letter to his sister, and his views of life seem to be somewhat different from those of the majority:—

"Dearest Nora,—. . . First of all I want to say that in the new camp I am magnificently comfortable. We are disturbed only by a veritable army of flies and of fleas which, notwithstanding disinfectants and special powders, give us no truce. But this is an insignificant thing, for, as I told thee, in every other respect we are very well and tranquil, waiting for some order which shall send us beyond the two thousand metres, beyond the mountains so dark in colour, at whose feet (as one might say, since we are separated from them by two valleys) we are encamped.

"I go around as though I were a tourist; I have been

to see a bridge on the river ——blown up by the Austrians; then various wild points of the valley, the bridges which our clever military engineers are throwing across roads and streams and other works of the kind; it is exactly the kind of life for the season, but I think that it will not last long. Here we have found also, how, with a relative amount of convenience, we can vary our daily meals, and I can assure thee that thou wouldst be astonished to see how many things I can do in the way of cooking: certain mixtures of meat and eggs which are a wonder: to tell the truth I do not know myself how certain innovations in the culinary art will result, but I consider that one good thing put with another makes something *very* good, so say Enea, Ettore, and Sisto (three other young men also from Imola), my table companions, who have to eat with their fingers, forks being lacking, but who lick the said fingers afterwards!

"The other evening I prepared *polenta* and then fried it; the weather was as cold as the devil, and it was most suitable and we devoured it all, even a lieutenant kept us company in this elegant refreshment partaken of at night.

"Tell Aunt Giselda that we have bought a pretty little dog, 'Nelusko,' which I should think of bringing to her as a trophy of war if I did not feel afraid that she would throw stones at it.—Thy affectionate GIORGIO."

Here is a little story of the heroic Bersaglieri, the men with the cocks' feathers in their hats, who can run and march or who go many miles a day on their bicycles:—

"At T——," said one of their sergeants, "our men were holding the pass into a valley in which were gathered some

Austrian forces, whose strength was not exactly known to us. One of our lieutenants asked the commander to send him down with forty Bersaglieri to reconnoitre. Permission was given. Arrived at the bottom of the valley, he encountered two of the enemy's officers.

"'Surrender,' cried the lieutenant.

"They smiled.

"'We are not going to surrender. We are more than three times as many as you.'

"They gave a signal, and from the woods near by came out two hundred men who assailed our lads with shots.

"The lieutenant took out his revolver, cheered his forty men, and with an impetuous charge succeeded in putting to confusion and dispersing the two hundred.

"He, together with some of his brave men, was left dead after the unequal battle, but for that day the victory was ours. And in that valley we have not seen the enemy again."

. . . .

There are very kind hearts among these soldiers. They are all devoted to children, and have a strong affection for the animals who work with them and share their dangers. The oxen and especially the mules have rather a hard time of it, but they are indispensable, and the men are generally very good to these patient, plodding beasts, who do some of the very hardest work of the war.

"They are like that, these soldiers. Some of them, employed in the care of the oxen, are so devoted to their beasts that they are depressed for days when one of them is sacrificed to the needs of the kitchen. They are for the most part peasants from the plains around Padua, expert

breeders of cattle. They have given a name to each ox, and they call the animals by it.

"One day a sergeant was taking four soldiers with some of the oxen up into the mountains. Half way on the road they were surprised by a terrific storm which lasted all the rest of the time they were on the way—four hours. They arrived wet to the bone to find that the company who had been waiting for the animals had already gone on. The sergeant said to his men:

"'Do you know what we had better do? Let us stop here to-night and light a good fire to dry ourselves.'

"The four men seemed discontented.

"'What is it?' asked the sergeant.

"'It is this,' answered one of the men timidly, 'that the oxen are suffering, and they would have to remain here wet and without any hay.'

"And so they started off at once, and made the four hours' march again in order to take the beasts back to their stable.

"It is a sight not to be forgotten when one meets along these roads a troop of oxen guided by soldiers. One of them goes in front riding solemnly on one of the animals, with the satisfied air of a fat pasha. And the rest of the herd follow him docilely up over the steep paths and along dangerous precipices.

"At certain times, when the cannon are silent, the patriarchal life seems to have returned among the soldiers. Abandoning their guns for the moment, they gather together and sing and listen to the stories of their companions."

. . . .

The war has brought out among the soldiers of Italy, as it has done in the other armies, many

songs and verses. The victim of most of these ingenious compositions was the Emperor Franz Joseph, but perhaps since he was called to his account they have changed some of the words.

There was one long, mournful ditty, every verse of which ended by sending the old man to the devil. . . . And the devil was offended and answered: "What do you take me for? I don't want him!"

. . . .

"Our company was the first, but I myself had already gone on ahead although the Captain had forbidden it, eager to come into contact with the Austrians. But we Italians are not made for spite. The first Austrian whom I saw was a fine big man, fair and with red cheeks, and he came towards us quickly enough. I was near him and I extended my hand and managed to say to him, 'How are you?' He blushed with pleasure, almost more than if a compatriot had greeted him. This may appear an exaggeration, but almost all of them are like that."

. . . .

A soldier from Pistoia writes to his sister, recounting the following episode:—

"From the beginning of the war I have seen many Austrian soldiers, a number of whom were deserters. They seemed pleased to be with us. On their caps, which bore the initials of Franz Joseph, they had fastened the tricolour, and it had an indescribable effect on me when I spoke to one of them and he replied in the agreeable dialect of Venice.

"It is these men who refuse to point a gun at the breasts

of those who speak their own language, and throw down their arms and surrender.

"In such moments, our uniforms were all different, it is true, but our feelings were all alike.—*June 26th*, 1915."

. . . .

Here is still another of the same sort, written during these first days when our soldiers had passed over into the "*irredente*" country. This is from one of the Alpini (the soldiers most dreaded of all by the enemy) to another:—

"Caro Augusto,—I am writing to thee as I stand in a trench, with my paper laid on my knapsack, at intervals; for every few minutes I am obliged to get up to keep a watch on the enemy. Every once in a while I hear a ball whistle over me, or some explosion of shrapnel falling here and there, but this does not stop me from finishing this letter. . . . We hold in our hands a number of Austrian prisoners who tell us that above all others they fear the Alpini. They say that an Austrian soldier who takes an Alpino prisoner has a reward of ten thousand crowns from his Emperor, but we are so well armed with strength and courage that no one of them will be able to have that satisfaction.

"I want to tell thee of a strange thing which happened here. In the morning, while it was still dark, a patrol of the —— Company had to make an attack with the bayonet on a trench of the enemy. There were eight of our men with a lieutenant while the Austrians were about twenty in number. At the shout '*Savoia!*' the enemy were taken by surprise in the dark, and took to their heels. Six of them, however, remained with us as prisoners, while a seventh lay hidden just outside the trench. One of our

soldiers, a certain M——, seeing him there gave him chase, and the two exchanged some shots. Then this M——, with a leap, was on him and made him prisoner. They two handled one another roughly, until at last this latter, that is to say, the Austrian, was forced to yield, and then they embraced. *They were two brothers-in-law*—one Italian from Laste, the other Austrian from Livinalongo; one had married the sister of the other a short distance away from the border. The German had let his beard grow since the war began so that the other did not know him. They wept and kissed for joy that they had not killed each other.

"Does it not seem strange to thee?"

Two Florentine soldiers, Misuri and Manetti, thus express their opinion of the old Emperor, "*Cecco Beppe*," the Italian nickname for Franz Joseph:—

"It was on the 7th of June when we crossed the frontier of Italy and set foot on the new land. On that day we soon left the boundary behind and came to the front before the enemy, where we are strongly entrenched. And while we recognise the strength of the foe, yet we are ready to destroy it without fear: '*Cecco Beppe has been too long the master of our house*, but now he must shut himself up in the attic and not show himself any more to us Italians.'"

. . . .

The letter which follows is one of the best examples of the kind, written by a loving son and brother, full of thoughtfulness for those left behind, but overflowing with patriotic feeling. It

was written by Armando Minuti, of the Field Artillery, to his sister:—

"Dearest Sister,— . . . and if fortune favours me I shall come to see thee when I am on leave. If, on the contrary, I do not come, I pray thee to be strong, thou and also the Mamma and Ruggero, and all of you must be proud to have paid the tribute of a son and a brother to our *Patria*. And in this case, I confide to thee the highest of all services: to console our poor parents and make them comprehend that I, like all the other soldiers, would be most happy in such a fate.

"At the present moment I am very well, we lack nothing, the food is excellent: if it was good at first, now it is even better. They take great care of us. Smoking materials have been a little scarce, but before long we are to have even those.

"Do not believe that one is badly off in war. The devil is not as ugly as he is painted. In fact, we are all gay and contented to fight in this fourth war of Italian Independence.

"When the cannon roar it is a festival for us, and you may believe that ours know where to aim; not like those of the enemy which make a great noise and do little harm. And when the firing ceases, a loud 'hurrah!' salutes our brave Captain, with whom we would go to the end of the world, certain that he would always lead us to victory.

"Forward always for the King and for the *Patria*, looking towards and waiting for the final victory and the decline of the Central Empires. *Viva l'Italia!* Down with the barbarians!

"And now, farewell; receive many, many kisses from your affectionate son and brother, Armando."

Whether the writer of the above brave words lived to go home again I do not know, but here are other noble sentiments expressed by one who was dying.

There were two cousins from Milan, named Treves, who both fell on the same day. One of them was a doctor, and he had taken the place of his Captain, who fell beside him. He himself was wounded in the breast, and carried to the ambulance, where he died, but before the end he managed to dictate his last testament, from which the following words are taken:—

"Comfort my family with the thought that I have fallen for the greatness of the *Patria*. In this supreme moment I turn with strong soul to my mother and I entreat her to remember me with a heart even stronger, for I die happy in having fulfilled my duty, as she always taught me."

The letter which follows was written by the soldier Francesco Pagnini, an artist. In the battle of —— Austrian shrapnel wounded him so severely in the face that he lost his left eye:—

"My dear Beppino,—After thy most valued visit my mind is calmer, and I shall ever be grateful for all that thou hast done and art still doing for me. In moments such as these, the affection of the family is of more value than the care of the doctor.

"Now, resigned to that which has happened, I am happy in having made my contribution: and I feel as though Trieste belonged to me, as does my beautiful Florence, the cradle of my art, of the fine arts.

"Dear Beppino, what a story is this! I have lost my

left eye in reading it, but the other is left to me with which to reach the last page where stands written: The End.

"What moments, what moments were those of which I have told thee; how many things which to all of you might have seemed obscure and difficult to believe; to me, however, it has been of great value to have gone through them, and I feel myself more of an Italian and more of a man in consequence.

"I have studied deeply the story of our country, and I realise its meaning; I recognise the grandeur of the heroes of our *Risorgimento*.

"This study of history had taken such possession of me that I was filled with dreams as I passed over the confines; dreams of another new Italy. I dreamed of making myself worthy of my task, and in the tempestuous nights, full of anxiety, I lived happy hours unconscious of the present.

"But fate was too cruel when it decreed that I should be struck insidiously where, on the slope of that never-to-be-forgotten mountain, we were all hidden, calm and ready for the advance.

"How much more happy should I have been if the wound, which every now and again torments me, had been received on the open road, where the balls were whistling; when I was on my bicycle, in the service of my brave captain, carrying orders to the companies of the battalion or elsewhere.

"I can never forget the name of my energetic captain, Roncucci, who took the place of the major who was ill, as I shall never forget any of the dear officers. And I must say the same of my brothers of the war! They are all true Italians, true heroes: all faithful to our banner, to our fine Regiment of the —— Infantry, nearly all Tuscans.

"And to you, Italian mothers! How much, how very much I sympathise with those who have sons at the front, or about to leave that maternal embrace, an embrace so brave yet so heart-breaking. But courage, courage, oh mothers of Italy, oh splendid women of our Latin race! You, too, who are so heroic, support our heroism, and soon in the beautiful blue of our heavens will shine a divine star, *The Star of Peace*, of universal peace.

"The deep gratitude of my heart goes out to all the brave captains, lieutenants, and doctors who have taken such kind care of me. Also I am everlastingly grateful to all the ladies and nurses of the Italian Red Cross, who are like mothers to us, like sisters and friends in trouble, in those moments which are a little sad.

"I leave off for fear of tiring thee, certain that thou wilt give good news of me to all my dear relations and friends; especially to my dear uncles and to all you others of the family, and believe me,—Yours forever, FRANCESCO PAGNINI.

"*Evviva Italia! Evviva Trieste! Evviva* my regiment, and all my brothers on all the front."

Another valiant and inspiring letter from a young soldier of Siena. He writes to his parents:—

"The day so long desired came at last. The sons of new Italy, led by Civilisation, armed in a just cause, were advancing, and so the people of the enemy retreated before them.

"My dear ones, I am proud and happy to jeopardise my young life for a sacred cause like this, the strength of my eighteen years! But no! My energies are not lessened, my strength is not failing, indeed I feel stronger every day!

"Every day, too, I am more and more convinced that what I have been able to do has not been done without thought, from the mere wish to experience and feel new sensations, nor from a fatalistic view of my possible end; for I have never thought of complaining of the fatigue which I must bear every day; I do all that is ordered as though all my life I had never done any other kind of service. Moreover, I feel my love for the family in a special manner because I am so far away from you.

"My conscience, the only true guide in all my undertakings, tells me that if I acted differently from the way in which I am acting, I should not be a worthy son of our great country, and I should no longer be able to hold my head high and to say I am an Italian!

"Every good patriot, every person worthy of the name of Italian should do his part according to his powers to tear these places from the talons of the ancient enemy; every one who knows how and who has the strength to grasp a sword should be more than followers of Victor Emmanuel II., of Garibaldi, of Pisacane, of the Bandiera brothers, of all the heroes of the Italian Independence. And the others should be the disciples of Mazzini, of the Cairoli, of Giusti, and of all those who by their example, words, and writing knew how to inflame the hearts of the Italians to a true and pure patriotism.

"Here we all love one another like so many brothers. Our moral tone is of the highest, and we are exceedingly well treated. I will say no more.

"Kisses to you all, to the grandparents, to my cousins and aunts, and to any who ask news of me.—Most affectionately, GUALBERTO."

. . . .

Ugo Cantucci was one of the first volunteers

from Siena. Like the writer of the preceding letter he was very young, but he was filled with a similar fervour of patriotism and went with joy to fulfil the task in which he met his end.

Not long before the battle which was his last, he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Nuovo Giornale* in which he said:—

"We have one fever alone which we do not wish to have healed: the desire of fighting. But our moment also will come."

. . . .

He was but nineteen when he fell, leaving the following will which was found on his body as he had hoped. The wishes expressed in it were carried out by his regiment, and the medal which was conferred on him for conspicuous bravery was afterwards consigned to a member of his family when medals were distributed.

This is a copy of his will:—

"If this paper should be found on my body, either dead on the battle-field or in hospital in consequence of wounds or illness:—

"1st. I desire that my body be buried in this earth, for which as a volunteer I fight.

"2nd. That my face be turned towards the enemy to whom I shall give my last look of defiance.

"3rd. That on my tomb be written: 'Here lies an Italian soldier.'

"4th. That the news of my death be given to my mother, Emma Cantucci, Via S. Martino 30, with due caution, and that something of mine be sent to her as a remembrance.

"With certain faith in our victory, *viva, viva* always and for ever, Italy, new and great."

. . . .

The Priests and the War

Before giving the extracts which follow, it must be admitted as a well-known fact that most unfortunately there are many men in the cassock of the priest who are either openly or secretly unpatriotic, and more of enemies than friends to the great cause for which Italy and the Allies are offering their all. Therefore there is the greater cause for satisfaction in the knowledge that the chaplains who go with the army are so faithful, so self-sacrificing, and so worthy to be remembered among the other heroes of the war.

The article from which these paragraphs are taken is from the pen of Alighiero Castelli, one of the most brilliant of Italian war correspondents, and bears the touching heading, "*Quando I Soldati Chiamono Le Madri*" (When the soldiers call their mothers).

"The Italian chaplains have given themselves to the work resolutely, without mental restrictions of any kind. Even to them our war is just, it is holy, for it is not founded on hate, on revenge, nor on arrogance, but on the necessity of giving back to the country its natural boundaries.

"One might enlarge on the attitude of the Pope in this or that contingency, but one cannot deny that in effect the religious service of our army goes on as though the Roman question did not exist; as though between the kingdom of Italy and the ecclesiastical power there had

never existed the slightest discord. I do not draw conclusions; I do not make comments, but I do acknowledge with pleasure the regular carrying out of the service.

"The Italian chaplains in adapting themselves to the new, disturbed, and exciting life, have the advantage of their office itself and of their own origin. Many of them have lived in constant contact with our people, and recognise in them their true value. They know that inside the rough shell is often the good fruit—that the simplicity of our peasants' lives and of the lives of our working men has given them an inexhaustible source of untouched strength. They know the sufferings and the privations of our people, and they are therefore in a position to appreciate every cry of grief. And what are the army and the navy but the same Italian people, from crowded towns or lonely villages, called to contribute to the war to the best of their abilities?

"Even in the lines of the chaplains there have been made honourable vacancies, and on the breasts of many shines the medal for bravery. People are ignorant of this. No one strews laurel branches when they return in silence to their parishes and to their studies. . . .

"Among those who have fallen was Padre Angelo Cerbara, who was killed on the Col di Lana. He was from the little village of Gavignana, in the Apennines, and priest of S. Maria in Aquino at Rome. A hand bomb broke his skull into fragments while he was attending a corporal. A companion writes thus of him:—

"'He was everywhere; wherever there was a soldier of his regiment, he was sure to come. . . . He could not get along without his soldiers. Besides that whenever there was an attack he was always in the first line. In the numerous assaults made by his regiment his boys would see him always coming with them out of the trenches, climbing up

hills towards the barbed wire of the enemy. All heard his words of encouragement; where soldiers had fallen wounded, he was ready, he saw every one before he was carried off to the dressing station. For him that was too comfortable, the dressing station! The place for him was where the bullets, the shells, the hand bombs of the enemy were continually arriving. Poor Cerbara! All day long he went about over the mountains, with that characteristic step of his, almost like a sailor's, in search of his boys. On Sundays, without making anything of the distance, he would say a Mass here, for example, and another ten, fifteen, or even twenty kilometres away, going without food, always cheerful and happy, with his little greenish cap on his head, making him look like something between a shepherd and an Alpino.'

"Silvio of Collalto Sabino (Perugia), chaplain to a regiment of infantry, received the silver medal, with this statement:—

"'The battle having ceased, he came in his priest's habit, with the crucifix in his hand, accompanied by an officer and the stretcher bearers, with white flags, and biers, to recover the wounded and the dead. To the enemy opposite him in the trenches, who fired on him to prevent him from executing his pious duty, he held up the crucifix and in a loud voice begged them to desist, to have respect for Christ and for the flag of truce; but the enemy's fire responded to his invocation. He, however, refused to leave the battle-field until he was sure that there were no more wounded to be brought in.'—*Col di Lana*, 17 July, 1915.

"When the soldiers, wounded, become like little children, the priest smooths their foreheads and teaches them to pray—that balsam of humble, suffering hearts. If the prayer hesitates on the bleeding lip, he speaks the

reanimating words, 'God—Italy,' and the eye of the sufferer lights up with joy. If death claims him, the mission of the chaplain is not yet finished. He has received the last wish and he must see it carried out. He has the honour of seeing that the soldier is buried.

"For this fervour of charity, for this piety which endures beyond the combat, we ought to honour the Italian priest dressed in the grey-green uniform."

. . . .

This prayer was found in the pocket of Don B., a priest with one of the ambulances:—

"Lord God,
In the name of the mothers of Italy who wait in vain for their sons,
In the name of the girls who weep their lost lovers,
In the name of those who can use the sword as well as pray,
In the name of those who left us smiling, who fought singing, and who fell, never to die,
Help the greatness of Italy,
And let us love thee, O God."

. . . .

In the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova of Florence there lay among the wounded a young Sardinian soldier. It was considered necessary by the doctors, on account of the very serious condition of his arm, to amputate it, but the young man could not make up his mind to submit to the operation. Hearing this, another soldier, also a patient in the same ward, wrote him the letter which follows. It was given through the kindness

of one of the sisters of the hospital to a gentleman in Florence:—

"I approach thee in this moment as thy mother would have come, to console thee for the bitter misfortune which has befallen thee.

"To lose an arm is not a fine thing, nor one to be enjoyed by any one, but for thee, oh beloved friend, it is an honour, because thou losest it for the *Patria*. Think how much worse it would have been to have lost it in consequence of an ordinary accident. Think of thy mother, of thy father. Death which is sure to seize thee inexorably if thou refusest to submit to the operation would occasion the most bitter grief and pain to thy beloved parents.

"Come, then, courage! Our brigade which has never retreated before the enemy, cannot, nor must not, have a man in its ranks, and especially one of the generous Sardinians, who would prefer death to life without an arm.

"No, Enrico, in the name of God, of thy parents, and in my name, and in the name of those who are around thee, follow the advice given thee by Professor Curti. He desires thy life, he wishes to preserve thee for the honours which await the brave, the heroes! Half close thy eyes, and see thine island, remember the noble deeds of thy ancestors, the fortitude of thy race, and ask them to grant thee strength to follow the counsels which are given thee for thy good.—*July* 11, 1915."

. . . .

It is a well-known fact that the war which Italy is waging in the Alps could never have succeeded as it has if it had not been for the wonderful roads which have been made through the mountains, and the extraordinary feats of engineering which

have surmounted heights and ascended steeps that to the ordinary mind were simply impossible. The men of the engineering corps, high and low, are just as important as the fighting men, for without their planning and the operations which they have carried out, provisions and munitions could never have advanced to the places where they were needed, nor could the men have marched there. Brother Mule can do a great deal, as has been said, in bringing the post and many other things on his strong and willing back, but even he cannot break through trackless forests nor go up perfectly perpendicular walls of rock.

It is worth while to remember the enormous difficulties in the way of fighting up among the clouds, and far away from ordinary means of transportation. Then there are avalanches to be taken into account, which may sweep away men and buildings and which are of frequent occurrence.

The great cold is hard to bear for men who have come from the southern part of the country, yet these very men have been especially brave and have acquitted themselves with much honour on icy slopes and through snowstorms. Some of the greatest feats of the war have been carried out by Sicilians and Sardinians.

But to come back to the road-making and so on. Here is a very interesting description given by Sub-Lieutenant Alceste Coluzzi to his mother:—

"These soldiers who work and fight are peasants and artisans, they are the sons of a generous soil, the strongest workers in the world: and they are also of every class and

social condition. When the murderous rage of the firing is not hissing around them, or while the cannon sound at a distance, they have to contend against another enemy, against the difficult and treacherous earth. And they lay out roads and paths up impassable slopes; up the highest and steepest peaks; they open passes through massive dolomitic rocks, by the force of the pickaxe, of mines and various kinds of tools. It is an animated swarm of little grey beings with their tools sparkling in the sunlight, climbing with set purpose on the vast grassy slopes of these granite colossi of the Alps, these superb and majestic monuments of Nature. And behold, in a few hours, on the edges of precipices which make one giddy, on crests which seem inaccessible, high up and low down, one sees as though by enchantment long furrows, tortuous and serpentine. They serve for the passage of the artillery and provisions on mule back. What a spectacle of industry and self-abnegation! What prodigious activity! They are our foot soldiers. They drag and transport even the largest cannon with boyish abandon and gaiety. They are sons of the plain, brought up in and accustomed to less difficult country, yet they compete in resistance with the strong and dreaded Alpini; they put up commonly with every inconvenience, moreover they are always in a good humour and they sing a variety of songs. In camp they all speak in dialect; they mix the invectives of the Roman with the comical and spirited exclamations of the Neapolitans, exchanging amusing jokes and dialogues in all the accents characteristic of the different regions of Italy.

"One no longer finds the bad characters, the undisciplined men of the barracks. The war has transformed them, has tempered them, the fire and the danger have roused the best elements in them; they work, they hope,

they burn with enthusiasm as much as the other men. How untiring are these brave boys! . . . One should see them at work, cheered by the firm and persuasive voice of the officer: 'Boys, work with a good heart, this road is for the cannon, which are our best friends, our protectors. When you hear them thundering against the enemy, you will feel great satisfaction in having carried out such a useful and advantageous task, and that deep satisfaction will be yours alone.'"

This letter shows the lighter side of warfare:—

"'The enemy is there before us. We are firing with rifles and cannon; he holds out with difficulty, but he still holds out.' The lieutenant exclaims:

"'Boys, it is necessary to dislodge those sons of dogs from their position: below there the ground is covered with strawberries. I found them when I was scouting there three days ago. Until now I have not told any one about it, because they are not ripe, but to-day they should be ready. In a word, I should be disgusted if those others should eat them. We will go ahead, firing as we drag ourselves over the rocks.' The Austrians struggle to maintain their position. The lieutenant's orderly says: 'Signor lieutenant, I am going down there alone. I will come back with the strawberries.' It was necessary to hold him so that he should not do anything so mad. But the others, those brave mountain boys, feel the inspiration, the push, of this audacity which hides itself under a caprice. Each one tries to go on as quickly as he can, slipping like a squirrel from rock to rock. The Austrians have some wounded, they retire in haste, firing wildly and without judgment as they go (as a corporal of Ivrea said to me), and they take to flight. The most advanced of our

men who are following them manage to turn round and to shout to their own officer, 'Signor lieutenant, we've got the strawberries.' And forward with the bayonet to threaten the rear of the retreating enemy. A quarter of an hour later, of the strawberries in that plain there were no more, and those which were not eaten by our men were brought to B—— in handkerchiefs tied to the barrels of the guns. And there where only the plants despoiled of their scarlet fruit remained, a soldier left, stuck through with a stick, the following card:—

"'The company of the —— Alpini will return here the day after to-morrow to lunch. The Austrians are advised not to attempt to have strawberries unless they are willing to pay the bill.'"

. . . .

Antonio X of Isernia comes of fine stock and does honour to it. His father, who is a printer, wrote to him, "I shall be happy in thy death if thy death is needed for the material and moral greatness of our Italy."

Here is his reply:—

"Dearest Father,—I shall have all the courage which is necessary. I feel that I shall have a great deal.

"Last night in company with three other bicyclists, at the command of a sub-lieutenant, we left to make a connection with the first battalion of the regiment that had been ordered into the first line, this being not more than seven hundred metres from the enemy. We arrived in the village and each one of us, after having received the required instructions, set to work, map in hand. So it was that a little later, walking along in the darkness of the night, I noticed that something was moving. From prudence I advanced with my rifle ready. A few minutes

afterwards I distinguished the figure of a soldier. Being doubtful whether it might not be one of ours, I abstained from firing. However, I followed him attentively with my eye, I let him pass, and as soon as I found that he could not be one of ours, I had him by the neck. I was not mistaken. When the lieutenant came up (he speaks German) I found that this was a Slav who had deserted from the Austrian lines. This is not an act of great bravery (far from me be such an idea!); but I referred to it only to let thee know that I have *even too much courage.—July 20th*, 1915."

. . . .

Another good son, Saverio Serrao of Catanzaro, writes to encourage his mother:—

"My dear Mother,—I am happy in knowing that you are all in the best of health, as I am: your letter has made me cry for joy with the good news you give me in regard to my brothers. You, my dear Mamma, must keep up a good heart and be tranquil; I understand your maternal heart, but you must have a strong spirit, as must all the Italian mothers in this historic hour of Italy. Remember that you are not alone, but that hundreds of thousands of mothers have their sons facing the enemy with weapons in their hands. Have courage, dear Mamma, remember that Saverio has you always in his heart wherever he may be. Whatever may be the perils of war in which I may find myself, the first of my thoughts will be for you and my brothers and sisters. And you also have a duty to fulfil: all the mothers of Italy must recognise this duty, which is that of educating the coming generation, our younger brothers, in great bravery. Then when we are under arms we are ready to sacrifice ourselves to our *Patria!*"

The writer of the next letter is the son of a patriot who suffered in former days in an Austrian prison. He writes to his brothers:—

". . . I have been in a village near our encampment and have had occasion to talk with the mayor. He, knowing that I am descended from the family of the Andreuzzi, showed me a world of courtesy.

"I feel very happy indeed to be in the native place of our poor father, and I am longing to begin fighting soon to avenge the *nine years* of cruel imprisonment which he suffered at the hands of Austria.

"Yes, the hour of vengeance has arrived; the moment of revenge; the commanding voice of that blessed soul inspires me and gives me energy: it tells me that we shall conquer the Austrians. . . . Too well our fathers knew the hard imprisonment of that perverse people; however, to-day the sons of those great martyrs have unsheathed the sword, and they shall be avenged.

"Ah! if our sacred dead could rise again! They would be happy in knowing that the Austrians are retreating at a rapid pace. . . .—*July* 17."

. . . .

A few enthusiastic letters follow.

A student from Aquila writes:—

". . . The *Patria*, our *Patria*, has suffered greatly from the imprisonment of our two sisters, Trent and Trieste. Now she is attempting to rescue them by main force, with all the rights of the martyrs imposed upon them. . . . I, as a son of this great and glorious Italy, I, as a citizen who feels it my duty to respect her, to love her, to serve her, could do no less than enlist in the Alpine volunteers. . . . We are thirty students from Aquila in a tiny village two

or three kilometres from the frontier. We are on guard by day and mount sentry at night in the important passes confided to our care. . . ."

. . . .

"*July.*

"You cannot imagine what pleasure I feel in hearing that my brother is called, so that now there are two of us to defend our brothers, that is to say, our beautiful land. Dear mother, you cannot imagine how happy it makes me to hear the name of the *Patria*, Italy, it seems as though one said, dear mother, dear father,—and as if my parents called me, that is to say, you and my sainted father. Keep happy and contented, for behold! are you not a fortunate mother? You have two sons under arms. Tell me what is my brother Niccola doing that he is not enrolled as a volunteer? And also, what is my uncle doing? Tell him to enlist too and I shall be happier.—GIOVANNI."

"Our objective is Trieste, and I say to you that we are very near. In a few days, that is to say, since the 24th, after crossing the shameful frontier, and after the taking of the beautiful city of Cervignano, we have done nothing but go forward, forward, forward, always with the faith and courage which are never lacking to him who knows himself to be Italian. And I tell you frankly that we have none of us ever understood as now what the Italians are able to do. I am very well, and I fly over these beautiful roads on my motor-cycle, in the best of health and with a fine appetite.—*July* 2, 1915."

". . . You may write in huge letters,—and I would that they were letters of gold,—that, at the assault of the most difficult positions where the troops had already tried

the other day to cut the enemy's wire (one of the most difficult undertakings, as it is easy to imagine) more than four hundred soldiers volunteered for the task.

"Moreover, those four hundred soldiers all belong to a brigade which recruited its members at Rome.

"The soldiers of the Capital know how to hold the banner of Italy high, and the population of Testaccio and the Trastevere are become heroes.

"I tell you that here one's blood is made new.—*July* 12."

"I am passing my time altogether in the trenches. The worst of everything is the cold, which at this altitude (2503 metres) makes itself felt. The night in the open air is very hard to endure.

"The enemy are more afraid of us than we are of them: even in the night they begin a firing which makes us laugh. The night preceding the 20th we had continual snow, and to-night we have the same. I am very well and have the appetite of a wolf."

This letter is from Ugo Conti, and the one following it from his brother Vittorio, both Florentines:—

"*July* 8*th*, 1915.

"My dearest Ones,—I am so enthusiastic in these days at being actually in the ranks of the combatants that I cannot describe to you my emotions.

"As you know already from my other letters, I am not only a non-commissioned officer of *zappatori* but I am also in charge of a supply column, and so every day I leave at dawn with thirty mules loaded with provisions, I at the head of them, mounted on a superb animal.

"The duel of the cannon is continuous, one hurries along under the fire of the enemy's artillery, but that does not stop us, we have become so accustomed to it that it has become the best diversion of our day.

"Believe me, the work keeps us all busy night and day, and the weather is of the worst, but this does not count, we are every one of us contented and ready to bear any hardship or meet any danger, and whatever happens we will meet it serenely for the safety and the greatness of our dear *Patria*."

. . . .

A little explanation in regard to the Alpini, their special functions and position in the army, may not be out of place.

They are the corps which does the scouting and the actual fighting on the high peaks and among the snow. Other soldiers who work with them, but who have not their training and experience, can do a great deal in the way of mountain fighting, but the Alpini themselves go where no unaccustomed men from the plain could or would dare.

They are those who have been mountaineers all their life, and when their time for the compulsory military service came, this was the corps where they were needed. From boyhood they have been accustomed to climb and find their way up steep peaks and over snow-covered slopes and across rough glaciers. They have been guides, making daring ascents alone or with ambitious tourists. Or some of them have been shepherds or goatherds, and have passed long days leading their

charges where the pasturage was fresh, between rocks and snow.

The officers of this corps are nearly always men from the mountainous provinces of northern Italy, and have been given to hunting on the Alps and climbing. They are as enthusiastic as their men over the service, which is filled with the excitement of danger and offers adventures of a hair-raising description.

This war of Italy is carried on largely in the snow, for though along the Isonzo and in the beginning of the country over which the army is advancing steadily there are plains and level roads, still, for the greater part of the time and for most of the regiments, the severe cold and fierce winds of the mountains must be faced.

Battles are fought where vegetation is scarce and where the rocks are so steep that it is almost impossible to hold the positions. But the men do hold on, and a little at a time, peak by peak, the country which Austria would like to keep in her tyrannous grasp is being wrested away from her, and the banner of the red, white, and green is being planted where the sun rising over the mountains finds it, and the white moonlight on the snowfields gives it greeting.

It is fitting that the tricolour should wave there where so many martyrs have lost their lives for patriotism and love.

A corporal of the Alpini, Giuseppe Sala, in writing to his family, speaks of some of the early conquests of these peaks of the Trentino:—

"The weather is our worst enemy. Not a day passes without snow or rain falling, or wind blowing: one can never be on duty for twelve hours without in the end being literally soaked. In spite, however, of the very bad weather and the tenacity of the Austrian '*Cacciatori delle Alpi*' (Hunters of the Alps), we are still in possession of the peaks conquered, and no one will be able to make us retreat. Here we are and here we remain!

"In our first advance we have not had any soldiers to face except infantry; but now there are, as I have said, the '*Cacciatori delle Alpi*.' These two have had, however, to pay dearly for our acquaintance.

"The spirit which reigns in our company is really something extraordinary. All we Alpini are ready for any effort, for any sacrifice; we have vowed to sell our lives dearly. And the hymn that has lately been popular in our lines reminds us of the valour of our fathers and encourages us to imitate them:

"'Nell'alpina aspra giogaia
Erto passo più non v'è
Dove l'orma non appaia
Dell'audace nostro piè.
Dal vecchio soldato al nuovo coscritto,
Ci unisce degli avi, dei padri la fè;
Col sangue dei padri sull'alpe sta scritto:
"Morir per la Patria, morir per il Re."'

"16 *July* 1915."

. . . .

This voice from the clouds is from a soldier belonging to the telephone service of a battery. From the peak where he has established his observatory he keeps watch and communicates

the results of his scrutiny to the battery down below. And they send instructions to him.

"Thou must understand that an observatory is an elevated point, a peak between the artillery of the enemy, from which one can follow the action and signal for the firing. . . .

"If thou couldst see the things which are visible from up here, this sea of mountains of every height and of every shape, these enormous mouths of fire which every day 'speak' from one side to the other; and if thou couldst see the terrible effect of their 'words,' thou wouldst comprehend how I am right in calling the impressions which I receive in my post of observation, extraordinary. At the same time, one is constantly under the track of these enormous '*confetti*' which shriek as they pass, with all the power of their destructive force. On the other hand, although the spectacle is not pleasant, yet it is interesting.

"Certainly, it is not a comfortable life. With such weather and tempests of snow and of rain, there is very little to make one cheerful. One has to stay for hours and hours in the midst of the clouds, not able to see a hand's-breadth before one's face in the fearful loneliness of the night, crouched under a tent hidden by brushwood and earth and trunks of trees. In the morning, when at the first warmth of the sun the clouds lift and disappear after ascending and descending in a fantastic dance, when one begins to discover through a rift in the mist the far-away position of the enemy and then our own battery, then begins the real anxiety, the mania to do well, to have a good day.

"And the telephone begins to ring. It is the message

from the Commander saying that from a certain point they are firing towards another. One runs to look it up on the map, one finds the place, one sharpens the eye against the glass: then a long, lamenting shriek cuts the air in front as a torpedo leaves a light track. . . . And down below come shock, explosion, destruction, death, confusion. At once, by means of the telephone, one communicates one's observations, the aim is corrected, while the angry replies of the enemy pass by, as though raging with hatred. . . . One waits with heart-beats suspended, thinking that those shots are going to take the lives of some of our men, and one hurries to point the glass towards our position. A thrill of joy and of gratitude seizes one: the shower has fallen a little on one side of our battery. . . .

"The observatory is the eye of the battery, the advance guard of the brave artillery, which down below, steady like the tree trunks which hide them, undaunted before the most tremendous dangers, are obedient to the short note of a whistle, like the scene-shifter in the wings.—*July 26th*, 1915."

The Alpini at Monte Nero

The Sub-Lieutenant Guido Rossi, of the mountain artillery, thus narrates the assault made at night by the Alpini on the formidable mountain:—

"I am writing with an exultant heart: I am or at least I should be tired to death, but who feels anything? Who realises any more that he has a body which suffers in moments like this? Who notices hunger, that he is sleepy, or completely exhausted? My heart is in a tumult, every fibre of my being is shaken, I am hardly in a condition to

sit still here and to write to those I love; the pride alone of feeling myself an Italian, an Alpine soldier, gives me the strength, the steadiness to write at length, to tell thee something of all that has happened to-night in this sector (certainly the best defended and contested of all). Monte Nero had to be taken at any cost; this terrible mountain, which overhung us and threatened us, defeated all our heroic efforts. Trenches in armoured cement, troops fresh and well armed, were awaiting us at the entrance of narrow passages between inaccessible rocks, where two men at a time could pass with difficulty. What was to be done? The Alpini, the mountain artillery, will go wherever they are ordered. If a wall of iron rises before them and they are ordered to take it, to overthrow it, one may be sure that the wall will be beaten down.

". . . Bringing my ideas a little in order, I will tell thee how the artillery began to prepare the action, with an admirable precision of aim, bombarding the enemy's works, without wasting or losing a shot.

" At night various battalions of Alpini advanced to the assault. They climbed up like chamois, the sturdy mountaineers, silent, stern, in the heavy stillness of waiting: not a stone moved, not a rustle revealed our arrival to our enemy, who secure in their inaccessible position, awaited our men at the entrance to the passage. When about six metres from the enemy's trench, a sentinel gave an anguished cry of alarm. Who can render the superb shout of '*Savoia!*' coming from thousands of brazen voices, from hearts of iron? Oh, the intoxicating cry, the burning tears of enthusiasm in giving that cry with the voice hoarse from fatigue, from anxiety, and the frenzy to get at the enemy in the trenches from which they had sown death! The cry must have made the adversaries shiver and

become paralysed. And we were victorious. And *Savoia! Savoia!* we shouted untiringly. . . .

"The long train of prisoners which came down this morning stared at the little Italian soldiers with stupefaction, who, 'better than bread,' divided their loaves with them, and gave them some of their meat. And they seemed to be asking: 'But are these the lions of last night, or is ours a dream, a nightmare?' Brave boys, who after the victory have no feeling of rancour for the vanquished, but who feel for them an almost brotherly interest. One hears nothing but: 'Poor fellows! they have been ten months in the war. Their sufferings are ended now. . . .'

"The Austrian officers, proud and self-contained even with us, have not been able to refrain from saying of our Alpini: 'They are most brave, like lions; braver than the Hussars of Death! With some regiments like these, we could get to Petrograd.'—*July* 15, 1915."

. . . .

The following is the last greeting of the valorous Sub-Lieutenant Basso, of Roccaforte, left by him to be sent to his parents in the event of his death:—

"17 *July*.

"Dearest Parents,—My orderly is instructed to post this which I am writing before the advance, in the probable event of our leaving our bodies there. Accept my last affectionate salutation and my warmest kisses. Pardon any troubles I have caused you on account of my inexperience; do not weep, for he who falls fighting for the greatness of the *Patria* does not die: we shall see each other again in better places than this, for we shall not always remain down here. I die satisfied in always having done

my duty faithfully and conscientiously. My last thought is for you, my relations and for one beloved, the object of all my dreams and all my hopes. Love me and do not weep.—MATTEO."

. . . .

Ugo Barni, a soldier at the front, writes to comfort his family on the death of his brother Giulio, whom he adored:—

"MY DEAREST ONES,—I know already the distressing news which will cause, if it has not already done so, such weeping and mourning in your circle. Our poor Giulio is no more. But he died as a soldier like him should die, as one who did not know the meaning of repose and calm. Do you remember? Always in motion; always active; ready in all just causes and for the most sacred battles. And what battle more holy, and what cause more just was there ever in the world than this? Therefore, the only consolation, nay the greatest alleviation, should be his beautiful death.

"To you, adored *Babbo* and Mamma, held in an affection greater in this moment than ever before, your son who is far away, but near to the infamous enemy, who is the cause of so much evil and so many misfortunes, sends to you a kiss, strong and powerful, so that it may give thee comfort, if in this great grief there can be any words of comfort. But we must have a brave spirit, is it not so?

"In all your letters, you incite me to be courageous. And I, as you wished, was brave and I still am. Now it is your turn to hear my prayer. Dry your tears, lift up your heads. Giulio, the good, the brave Giulio is dead, and his death is worthy of him. . . .

"Therefore take heart, as I am doing. If you could see

me face to face you would see that I do not weep any more and that I am waiting. I wait for the day of vengeance. The friends here who surround me with loving care, and to whom I am eternally grateful, swear that they too will avenge him, for they greatly loved and appreciated our dear one. This should be to you also an immense consolation . . . remember that we are in such wicked times that a collective crime may become a beneficent work.

"Of these terrible times we too have been victims, therefore it is for us to take our part in the re-establishment of peace and justice.

"For this most noble cause our Giulio died. Honour to him. His sacrifice, united to that of so many other brave men fallen like him, will save in the future much suffering to others. This, too, should be a great comfort to you.

"Courage then, *Mamma buona*, courage, *Babbo*, who knowest how many sacrifices we cost thee, courage, sisters and brothers: my voice, so far away yet so near to your hearts, should help to lessen your great mourning.

"Courage and kisses.—Ugo."

. . . .

Two stories of bravery and patriotism are given here:—

"At the ambulance at S——, a village now ours, I saw a stretcher arriving on which lay a captain: a shell exploding a few steps from him had wounded him in the spine. He was biting his hands, and murmuring some words. I thought that he was lamenting and cursing his fate; and instead, on approaching him, I heard him say these words, which I repeat almost exactly:

"'I had already drawn up three platoons; it only needed the fourth when this cursed splinter of a shell

struck me! Might it not have waited to kill me until I had completed all my work? Yesterday, I was in the midst of an infernal fire and nothing happened to me; to-day, when I might have done something worth while . . .'

"Then, calling the sergeant who had accompanied him and giving him three hundred *lire*, he said:

"'These belong to the Company, for their pay and their tobacco. And here are twenty *lire* for the Company to drink a glass to my health. To you, poor fellows, I do not say anything: you have done even too much, and I do not know how to thank you.'

"I turned round, and I saw that every one, like myself, was greatly affected. And the captain added:

"'Do your duty always as you have done it up to now. Make yourselves honoured, and be good soldiers. I have led you thus far, I wanted to go forward with you . . . I cannot. . . . This cursed shell has parted us!'

"How does it seem to you? Is it not a beautiful example? And you also may believe that all our officers are like this.—*July 23rd.*"

. . . .

The episode here mentioned is told by a doctor in one of the hospitals at the front in a letter to his little son:—

"Dear Filippo,—Yesterday evening I was present at a scene so moving that I cannot keep from telling it to thee, so that thou mayst see what our soldiers of Italy are. About seven o'clock there was brought here in the motor ambulance a corporal of artillery from the district of Castrovillari, who, in a battery near by, had been wounded by a shell which had splintered his leg and wounded other parts of his body. He was very, very pale, poor fellow,

from the great quantity of blood he had lost, and he breathed with difficulty; his pulse was imperceptible, he was so weak. As soon as he was brought in, he turned his eyes around and:

"'I feel that I am dying!' he exclaimed. 'But first I want to kiss the flag . . . the flag.'

"It was brought to him immediately; he lifted his head a little, and placed his lips on the flag and gave it a long kiss. Letting himself then fall back:

"'I am content: I die for the glory of the *Patria!*' he said.

"Very soon after he was gone.

"When we read such stories in books, they seem to us like fables. . . . No, this is not a fable, not a poetical tale. It is a real drama which affected me and my colleagues and the soldiers who were present to tears!

"We covered that poor body, the body of that unknown hero, with the tricolour, and the same flag shall cover his bier! He was twenty-one years old, strong and robust.

"Honour to his memory!

"Thy Papa kisses thee and embraces thee affectionately."

. . . .

The letter which Captain Vizzardelli left to his little son before leaving for the Carso where he met his death:—

"Dearest Cesare,—If Fate should prevent me from guiding thee up to the age of maturity along the path of life I desire that, besides those things which will be taught thee by thy angel of a mother, thou shouldst know some of the principles which I myself would have instilled into

thee and which I consider absolutely as the basis, not only of integrity, but of happiness in this world.

"Believe in God and in our religion as thy heart and conscience shall dictate, but have a firm faith without false prejudice, live as a good Christian and as a good gentleman, as thy mother will teach thee, thanks to whose goodness I myself have been strengthened in my faith.

"If, as I trust, thy mother will be with thee for many years, she who knows my most intimate thoughts will know how to transmit them to thee, and to improve on them, and thou wilt find in her such a guide, such a comfort, such an example, as I certainly should not have known how to be to thee, neither I nor any one else in the world.

"Remember that I should have left thee free to follow that road along which thou feelest that thou canst walk worthily in the world, urging that thou shouldst as soon as possible gain thy own living, without depending on any one, but remember too that I consider it as an absolute obligation of honour to serve one's country, and whether this is commanded by the law or not, do not forget that when Italy has need of her sons, it is not with words or with other actions that thou shouldst respond, but by hurrying voluntarily to arms in so far as strength and age permit, and by fighting valiantly as did our fathers.

"And this is a point on which *I cannot absolve thee if thou or thine should be remiss*, for a profound conviction inspires these words, and the desire that thou shouldst hand it down to thy sons like a talisman which will preserve them from moral decadence, and then in whatever position they may be, they will always be good gentlemen and honest men.

"Those strict rules of honour which should always form

the basis of the education of a good and brave man, should not be tampered with by thee or by thy children. It is better to err in having too much energy than in weakness with regard to truth and honesty; our nature being such that we always remain on a lower level than our aspirations even when those are high: beware that thou dost not fall too far below!

"Remember the prayer which I always repeated from the time when I entered the military college as a child; in it is comprehended all our duty: 'My God, grant that my life may proceed to the end for which Thou hast given it to me, that I may grow brave and good, so that my parents may have in me a good son, the *Patria* a good citizen, and the Army a good soldier.'

"Remember that it is due to thy dignity and to thy name to be always able to make sacrifices and to exact them from thy family. No false positions then! Never lower thyself, but rise higher, with the wholesome ambition to leave intact the moral inheritance of our fathers and to advance the family for the better.

"When thou choosest a wife, listen to thy mother, who has been the guardian angel of all our family and certainly will not fail thee. Have a blind faith in her, let thyself be guided by her heart as well as thine own, but if by misfortune thou shalt be alone and must decide, remember that thou hast no right to have descendants, if from the beginning thou must impose on them a life of privations: the most lofty enthusiasms perish when the vulgarity of life smothers them! God forbid that with this thought I should seem to urge upon thee low considerations of self-interest, but God forbid that thou shouldst not seriously reflect that family happiness depends equally upon three factors: the faithfulness of both husband and wife, their

firm love, and means proportionate to their habits and their name.

"I commend to thee thy sisters also when thy mother is no more. Work with diligence, and urge thy children to work also. May God bless thee and may He give thee all the success which thy affectionate father wishes for thee!"

The following extracts are taken from two letters by Corporal Major Enrico Baschenis, son of the mayor of S. Brigida in Val Brembana. They are his last letters, for he died fighting at Plava:—

"Dear Babbo,— . . . I am with my regiment under the fire of cannon from the forts of Gorizia. At this very moment there reached here some of the enemy's big shells (305), which, on exploding, make enormous holes. The guns sound almost incessantly, but now we are accustomed to hear them.

"I am waiting anxiously to go into Gorizia, and after that, Trieste, to show that people what blood runs in the veins of Italians, or rather in the veins of the Latin race. New glories are being added to old glories of the past, and the sons of to-day are the worthy children of their fathers: the glories of the new era crown the past era. May the enslaved people be freed, the proud humbled, the torturer, the guilty be punished. May that little yet great people be avenged who gave all their life for their honour, for their liberty.

". . . I fight with an intrepid spirit, *Babbo:* either liberty or death. And I shall die, perhaps; but I shall die content, with the hope that my great mother may be free, strong, respected, and covered with glory, and that she may have sons worthy of her. I shall die turning my last look

towards my grand cradle, Italy; my last words shall be a salute to my family, to my parents, to the *Patria;* my last kiss shall be given to the beautiful tricolour, symbol of liberty. One grief alone will disturb me: that of having caused sorrows to you, my dear parents; but my life will be enough to obtain your pardon.

"I am now on the heights of Plava, which have been conquered with continual assaults of the bayonet. The cry '*Savoia*' has echoed repeatedly through these dark valleys, over these rocky mountains, fields of glory. Dear *Babbo*, believe me that the more the peril increases, the more grand is the sacrifice, so much the more are the hearts of all of us exalted. Blessed are those who return, blessed the dead, for they shall be immortal.—*July* 19*th*."

The Sub-Lieutenant Filippo Guerrieri of Liguria thus writes to a friend:—

"In anguished expectancy I remember all of you, dear Genovese friends, and I feel you all present and gathered near me, around me, and not as in imagination, but living, palpitating with enthusiasm and faith, in the salutation which you send me in the name of Christ, in the name of the sacred and holy but sorrowful *Patria*. Thou speakest to me of companions who are already fallen, already dead for liberty, but we still resist, and we are hundreds of thousands of young men, all in the flower of our youth, ready to avenge and to sacrifice ourselves serenely on a day of sunlight like this, in the blood of redemption as our fathers bless us from their tombs, together with our life-long friends who have fallen smiling in the new war for the new Italy. And I, and we, shall we also fall? . . . And what does it matter? Not the bitter weeping but the vibrant

Faith which gives life to death: not the eyes filled with tears and wandering in grief after the departed, but turned resplendent in the quiet nights, in the azure of the heavens, towards the Star of luminous rays. Shall we fall? Ah, it does not matter: enough that your sons will remember us and keep intact in their minds and hearts, as in a sanctuary, our fears, our throbbing hearts, our sighs and our hopes: enough that you who are left shall not be weaponless and unfit, but will create by yourselves and for yourselves, with us and for us, all that is beautiful, all that is good; you will be able to understand the sacrifice which we religiously and bravely accomplish without fear or hesitation."

The sailor Giovanni Parlani, who was present on board of one of the ships at the glorious loss of the *Amalfi*, writes his impressions to his uncles:—

"Dearest Uncles,—July 7th, 1915! Memorable date, a date which will remain impressed on my mind as long as I have life, to make me remember what the Latin race is; of what courage, of what serenity the Italian sailor gives proof, even in moments when the essential things are those of death or life. In the Italian Navy, from the lowest cabin-boy to the Admiral, we are all more than sure of victory, for he who has seen what I have seen with my eyes and heard with my ears, and knows what the Italian sailor of to-day is capable of doing, contrary to what was supposed by an imbecile like Franz Joseph, is certain of the final victory. All we sailors are very proud and exalted, and glory in taking part in and belonging to the great Italian Navy.

"I will stop, crying from the depths of my heart: *Viva*

l'Italia! Viva la Marina Italiana! and I would like to say: *Viva* the crew of the *Amalfi!*"

. . . .

An engineer-lieutenant, Francesco Pricolo, who directed a successful bombardment against the arsenal of Pola, thus writes home:—

"DEAREST PAPA,—Thou wilt have read in the papers of the bombardment of Pola by a dirigible, the 'P4,' the one to which I belong.

"The undertaking was attended with very great risk, and everything which I saw and did seemed to me like a dream: even yesterday I could not believe it myself and it appeared impossible that I was still unharmed.

"Think that for more than a quarter of an hour we were under the fire of more than fifty cannon and of thousands of guns, illuminated by more than forty search-lights. Fortune aided us in a marvellous manner, for thick clouds surrounded the dirigible, and hid us from the sight of the enemy who kept on firing although they could not see us any longer.

"We meanwhile had already dropped bombs on the Arsenal, producing serious damage, and almost certainly a bad fire also. We were at a height of eighteen hundred metres, and we heard the tremendous explosion of the bombs.

"As soon as the great blow was struck, we returned to ——, safe and sound, received by all our soldiers with a delirium of admiration. . . . In the morning we were received by the Admiral of Venice, who embraced and kissed me, saying to my Captain Valle and to me, '*Bravi*, you have avenged Venice.'

"Our raid is one of the most difficult accomplished up

to now, and I am delighted to have taken part in it.—*July* 11, 1915."

. . . .

A poor peasant, Alessandro Verrone, who has a wife and children at home, thus writes to his family:—

"I pray God that He may watch over us up to the last instant, because of the sacrifices which we willingly make to drive out the tyrant and the oppressor of our brothers, and for the greatness of our dear country.

"Do not doubt it, we shall all be strong and courageous like lions at the cry of: *Viva la libertà, viva il Rè e l'Italia!*

"I shall be careful but eager at every moment, because I am convinced that your prayers and the prayers of our dear children accompany me everywhere.

"Do not despair. Sooner or later I shall be with you, and proud that I can say that even my arm has struck a blow for our victory.—11 *July* 1905."

. . . .

Even the men who are not yet on the firing line nor in the *Zona di Guerra* are as enthusiastic as the others who are already in the exciting life of the front. Here are a few words from Renato M. of Bologna written while waiting for his commission:—

"Now I shall go there, on to the field of battle, there to that fire, to that steel which is tempering the life of the nation, there where one never dies; there where, though the body may fall, one gains imperishable glory; and thy friends and the circle of thy acquaintances will gather their children around them and say: 'Do you hear this

name? It is that of a hero who died for the greater glory of our *Patria.*'

"Thee, my country, thee, my mother, most beautiful, most sacred, I salute thee, I give thee my hopes and my last thought."

. . . .

From a sailor to his mother:—

"We will be strong and daring, prudent and careful; and I do not know how to tell thee anything else, dear Mamma. The sailors of Italy have few words; they express themselves in deeds. . . . The enemy who is before us is an enemy whom it is our dream to confront. He heroically bombards hospitals and kills women. We are searching for him in his hiding places, we are waiting for him in the open, wherever he may come he will find us. And do not fear for me; this page of history is worth more than my life. If thou dost not receive news of me be not alarmed; we are all well, we have everything we need, our officers are like our elder brothers."

Here there is a break. The page of writing is interrupted by the words, "To my Mamma," and after them the following:—

"Mamma, and if I should never more embrace thee, and if this should be my last salute to thee, to my brother, to my sisters, well, I shall remember thee and I shall remember you all tenderly up to the last moment. But thou must not weep, because one weeps over the tomb of a son who dies, not over that of a soldier who falls in a sacred battle. Like the mother of the Cairoli. . . . And thou understandest me, Mamma!"

And here are a few words from another sailor:—

"As I have said already, if I am in a naval battle, I shall do everything possible to realise my dream even at the price of death. To die! But who is it that fears to die? A coward. My heart is ready for anything, the bullet does not alarm me.

"Also if God wills that I shall die, I leave thee, my Father, to pride thyself on having had a son who was a volunteer and a hero, and thou must remember well that to die in war is not death but glory.—*July* 31, 1915."

. . . .

From a letter written on board one of the Italian ships by a young officer to his sister on the night before an attack off the African coast:—

"The night is wonderful. The stars by thousands and thousands rain a living light over the phosphorescent sea. It is my watch . . . and I can see low on our right the long, narrow strip of sand which is our goal. . . . On board no one is asleep; the anxiety for the morrow is stronger than fatigue. . . . The ship echoes to songs and music and exultant shouts as the moment of glory approaches: a delirium which has made me thrill in every fibre. Moreover we all know that to conquer we must die; in fact those who will fall are already marked. If the heavens are full of light, the sea of quietness, the air of impalpable harmonies, it is because the dying eyes preserve the impression of this our beauty, ours in the centuries which were, ours in those which shall be. Rome lies under the heavy coverlet of sand over which the unconscious Arab passes, and my heart beats fast at the thought that arches, columns, porticoes, and temples will rise again in

the midst of fields and pastures and pleasant cities; while safe from perils our ships ride the familiar seas of Venice.

"It is dawn. Here the dawn is not pale and cold as on those mountains where thou art: it flames and the sea is tinged with deep gold. You are sleeping still, for you do not know. You do not know that the supreme hour is striking, in the silence of the red dawn. You do not know that, dedicated to victory, I shall soon go at the head of my sailors with the shout of '*Italia! Savoia!*'

"When thou wakest, sweet sister, my beautiful dream of glory will be realised.—RICCARDO."

. . . .

As soon as the word went forth that the Italian army was marching towards and over the frontier and entering the territory which it was their object to include once more with the *Patriato* to which it rightfully belonged, the Austrians began to act as they have always done in the past, abusing the defenceless and spoiling the weak. All over the beautiful provinces where the redeeming troops were advancing, the enemy drove out the people who could not serve them, and took all the men for their own army. The villages were sacked and destroyed with as much thoroughness as time permitted, and terror and suffering reigned.

Here is a letter which says a few words on the condition of these parts of the country:—

"We are advancing: the burned villages which the cruel enemy have left behind them are a proof of this. I saw the other night, on coming back to camp, from a hill dark with cypresses and deserted by all life, an Italian village in

flames; and one encountered the inhabitants, driven out, in groups along the road; old men, women and babies, cows (mothers too) with their calves bellowing with pain, and dogs barking from the roadside at our noisy passing.

"Under a hedge an old woman with her frightened grandchildren sat lamenting: what pain! and under the starry sky their homes were burning. Oh human grief!

"But the sacred ashes will be fruitful, even they, in this springtime of martyrdom, of glory and of brotherhood. . . .

"I embrace you here under the stars, in the face of the mountains fortified with cement and iron, at whose feet our dead are already reposing serenely.—*July* 31, 1915."

A few cheerful words to his mother from Fiore Tarantino, corporal of artillery:—

"*July* 20, 1915.

"We are as happy and gay as though we were taking part in a wedding feast, in which the sweetest melody is the sound of the cannon and of the machine gun.

"I sing in these lands made sacred by the noble blood of the fallen, the songs which I often sang with my dear companions, who are fighting here, in my company, brave and strong, on these mountains of the Irpina:

'*Sulle balze del Trentino*
Pianteremo la bandiera . . .'

we were singing, then, and that song, which was full of an ardent faith, of fervid wishes and a lively hope, is now a hymn of war.

"Our tricolour, under whose shadow we fight confidently, already floats over 'redeemed lands,' and soon

shall wave, the signal of valour, of civilisation and of love, over the castles of Trent and over the opal waters of our Trieste.

"We have faith. *Viva l'Italia!*

"In thy prayers direct one of the most earnest to God that He will smile upon the arms of our beloved *Patria.*—FIORE."

CHAPTER V

AUTUMN IN HOSPITAL AND IN ACTION

THIS letter was dictated to a nurse, word for word, by a contadino from Brianza, who had lost an eye:—

"*August* 12.

"DEAR WIFE,—I am in the hospital for a small matter. I might perfectly well have written myself, but these doctors of to-day are full of fears and so annoying for even a trifle of fever. I am buried in covers up to my neck; immovable and on a diet. I am terribly hungry, and thou knowest how much *polenta* I could eat! . . . In a few days I am going out to enjoy the sunlight and fresh assaults. It is possible that we shall be sent back to bivouac or my class may be sent forward, that remains to be seen. In any case, remember to get the men for the harvest; with regard to the grain, it is better to hire the steam thrashing machine from Tito Marchiana, so that the work can be more quickly finished. Do not forget to send the usual measure of flour and the accustomed quintal of rice to the asylum of V——, that once gave courage to grandfather, of whose poor orphans I want to think a little.

"And the fruit, how is that coming on? Will the vintage be good? Perhaps I might arrive in time to taste the wine and the first roast chestnuts.

"The baby? What is he doing? Does he remember me? Kiss him as I kiss thee.—AMBROGIO.

"P.S.—If I should not come back, my Carla, be resigned; bring up my son well, and stay with thy mother. Our brothers will look after the land, and we, if thou lovest me always, shall meet again in heaven."

. . . .

"Among the blind soldiers, I remember two especially brave men, who were awarded the silver medal for military valour. One of them was Maresciallo Orlandi, who, having already lost one eye in Tripoli in the war with Turkey, afterwards lost the other while fighting on the Carso. The other hero was the soldier Pompili who, blinded at the front, said to the King, who was giving him some words of consolation:—

"'Your Majesty! The last thing which my eyes beheld was the sight of the enemy beaten and decimated as they retreated. We shall conquer. That is enough for me.'"

. . . .

The following touching words were written from a field hospital by Elia Rossi of the cavalry to his captain. He was under treatment for a most serious injury to the jawbone, which would deprive him of the power of speech:—

"MY NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN CAPTAIN,—Pardon me if I write like this, but I know how very, very good thou art. I have seen thee the first to run to the attack under the most violent fire and I have loved thee. I kiss thee again. I have learned calmness from thee, and to-day, though wounded, I smile. Probably I shall remain dumb, but I am content because before becoming so I was able

seven times to shout '*Savoia*' with my brothers, and many murderers fell at our feet.

"Captain, thy soldier kisses thee with all his heart."

In the Hospital

From a letter to a priest, Don Brivio:—

"This is being written to you by the nurse, for I am not able to write any more. I am in a little white bed, so clean. What happiness! There were so many, many years, Don Brivio, when I slept on the straw and the grass. I have not courage to move, nor to touch the sheets and pillows with these hands. I am happy, *sor curato.* Imagine it, I who have done nothing, I am a hero; yes, a hero, says our general. They pinned a medal on me yesterday, a medal of bronze, which on the shirt looks like a black stain. But do not, I beg you, think that I did any great thing. It was a trifle, an affair of nothing. . . .

"We were gathering up the wounded, when all at once I noticed two black things on the ground, a few metres from the captain, who, with his field-glass, was watching the artillery dismounting their pieces. With a leap I arrived at the shoulder of the captain and threw myself on a man and choked him before he had time to think. But his companion, who held a big knife between his teeth, fell upon me. I had nothing but my teeth and nails, but with bites and scratches and blows I fought, and he thrust with his knife, until finally we rolled together on the ground.

"When I opened my eyes I found myself in this bed. A beautiful lady sat beside me, smoothing my brow.

'What a brave boy! what a good child: he has saved his captain's life.'

"Yesterday the captain came to see me and he kissed me! Then the nurse lifted me up on the pillows; I have no more strength, the wounds are bleeding. In presence of the general and of a duchess who is here to nurse the wounded, they pinned on me the medal for military valour.

"Who would have said, *sor curato*, that I should not finish my wasted life in prison but here among kind people?

"The captain goes to visit his children: he has four of them.

"I shall die to-night, it seems; the chaplain is coming to give me the holy oil. I am too weak to confess myself, but it does not matter. . . . You know all my sins, even those which I have forgotten, and you will absolve your grateful GIOVANNI."

. . . .

From the note-book of a nurse:—

"*July 8th.*—What blood our soldiers have in their veins! The first moment possible after an operation (and *such* operations, *Dio mio*) one finds them in good spirits, and eager for news of the advance. . . . 'Doctor, have they taken A——? Have they reached B——?' Each one boasts of the valour of the company or regiment to which he belongs. Sometimes, as they are convalescent, great discussions arise as to the respective merits of their leaders.

"But such good sons; their great preoccupation is always for their home. One must write to the old people, or else one cannot sleep. . . . For one must understand, the women never having been to war have their heads full of fears of danger. . . . Therefore one must give them to

understand that the enemy do not know how to aim, that one has an excellent appetite and is in good spirits.

"'Signora, will you write a letter for me?' 'Signora, could you send a card?' 'Signora, I would like to send a message to my *padrone*.' 'Signora, I would like to send, I want to send,'—here there is a pressure of the hand, and a name barely whispered—'It is my sweetheart, you should see her. Such a rose, such a star!'

"I bring out the supply of illustrated postcards; they select one or two and begin to dictate. I put down the salutations, the requests of these brave fellows. Some of them are timid and become confused. Is it shame in confiding their affairs to me or irritation that they do not know how to express themselves? Who knows! Others are very angry because of their ignorance. '*Maledizione!* not to know how to write!' More often they say, 'You do it, signora, you are so learned, you write a little. . . .'"

. . . .

This incident happened in a hospital in Rome:—

"For whom are you looking, my good woman?" and a young nurse comes forward smiling.

"For whom am I looking? That is fine! I am looking for Tonio, my husband, who has gained the sergeant's stripes. He wrote that he was wounded, a trifling matter, and that I was not to trouble myself to come, that he would soon be able to come back to our village, and many other stories like that. But I, I have always acted according to my own ideas. So I told the grandfather to look after the children, and off to Rome I have come to embrace my brave Tonio and to bring him home. . . . But I am losing time, chattering here. You will tell me where he is?"

The nurse grows pale. Pointing to bed number 32 . . . "He is there," she says. "I will show you the way," and passing with a light and rapid step to the bedside she whispered to the patient, "Here is your wife. Courage." Then turning to the peasant woman who follows her:

"He was asleep. Now see him awake and happy."

"Ah, my Tonio, how are you? Let me see. Hm! A little thin and a little brown; with the sun, I understand."

"The children?" he asks anxiously.

"The children! Two flowers. Maso, who has a battalion of soldiers, shoots all day like thee. Gigetto has learned to stand on his legs, and trots about the house and the courtyard; my two eyes are not enough to look after that rascal. . . . But I have great news, splendid news. Canst thou guess? But no, thou canst not. . . . Imagine, Tonio, Uncle Meo has left to us his field, actually to us, that beautiful field which yields so many good gifts of God. And not only that, but that old villain who would squeeze a *soldo*, has left a thousand *lire* to thee, my Tonio, because thou hast always treated him with respect. Therefore, we must rejoice, and set to work. By good luck, thou hast stout legs, and thou wilt be able to travel the road up the hill as easily as thou couldst drink a glass of good wine. . . . But what is it? Dost thou say nothing? Art thou not content? Up, speak, kiss thy Nenna."

Without speaking, he pushes back the sheet. The woman gives a wild shriek, and gazes stupe-

fied at the two dreadful stumps, wrapped in bandages and cotton-wool. Tonio's legs are gone.

"Forgive me, Nenna. I was ashamed to write it to thee. . . . Have patience, forgive me. . . . If thou dost not want me, I can go to the workhouse. It would have been better to die, but the doctors wanted to save me. . . . Nenna, forgive me."

Hearing these words, she trembles, and forcing back her sobs, she dries her eyes on a handkerchief printed in red and black squares. She tenderly replaces the covers, and says between kisses:—

"Thou art the master. Thou must always be the one to command. Don't give this a thought. Am I or am I not thy Nenna? We will buy a little cart at once, won't we? Thou shalt go to the field to look after things. The eyes of the master accomplish miracles. In the country there is a fine saying: The arms count more than the legs. . . . Now I love thee more than ever, for now thou hast made thyself honoured as a patriot. And how fortunate we are, my Tonio! Godfather Beppe has lost his son, and Mariangela's husband is dead, and who knows how many will never return! But thou art come back. The Blessed Virgin be praised."

. . . .

The station clock struck noon. A train of thirty carriages stood ready to bear away several hundred young men, all of whom seemed to be in the greatest spirits. An old peasant, very old, to judge from the wrinkles which furrowed his forehead and cheeks, was holding a fine, robust youth by

the arm. "Not to praise thee too much, I can say that I know that thou wilt be one of the bravest of them all. Do thy part, and come back with the red ribbon in thy buttonhole. Thou comest of good stock, *per Bacco!* I am expecting to open for thy triumphs that special old wine; thou knowest."

He smacked his lips and winked one eye at me (I happened to be near). Dense clouds of smoke hid the departing train, and after a few minutes nothing more could be heard of it but a rumble in the distance.

Curious, I turned to the old man: "Is he your grandson, that fine boy?"

"Grandson? Say son, my youngest. A happy heart. When I said to him the other evening, 'Listen, it seems to me that thou, too, shouldst enrol thyself as thy brothers have done,' he took to the idea at once. He has gone. At his age, you understand, one is apt to think of love, and his sweetheart is truly a dear little thing. He went to see her, and when he returned, he said to me, 'I am ready!' And I,—'Repeat the oath, then.' He swears. This is the eleventh whom I send, *signor mio;* six sons and five sons-in-law. I have brought together in my house the ten wives and thirty grandchildren. Those who return will bring up the children of those who fall. How does that seem to you?"

And slapping me on the shoulder, the brave man laughed with his eyes, with his lips, with his wrinkles.

Says the Baron G., who tells the story, "I wanted to laugh, but emotion conquered me. I

took his rough hands and kissed them, then fled like a thief, such shame did I feel for having lived so selfish a life. I tell you that I have never got over the impressions of that hour." [1]

. . . .

"ZONA DI GUERRA, 19 *October* 1915.

"DEAREST AND BEST BELOVED,—During the night or to-morrow I shall depart on the new and arduous enterprise. What enthusiasm fills not my soul alone but the souls of all, from the humblest soldier to the supreme commander, what faith in the proclamation of Vittorio Emanuele of Savoy, 'I must lead you up there, at whatever cost.' And now we are going there, *Babbo;* I shall be among the first—the first to seize the laurel and the crown of glory. In an hour so full that even the air itself seems to vibrate with the beating of our over-charged hearts, all else is forgotten, and there shines resplendent before us the *Patria*, Italy, beautiful and beloved. How we adore this land, this blessed land! With a heart trusting in God and a soul given entirely to Him and an entire consecration to my Italy, forward, forward!

"My desire of a return to you burns like a flame, and I long to throw myself into your arms, but if, up there, where so many of my companions have found their glorious tomb, I too must fall, weep for me—yes,—but let it not be the weeping of despair. Let your grief be a sacrifice to the land which to-day smiles for the conflict of the morrow, smiles from its infinite depths of azure under the sparkling sun.

"The cannon have rumbled incessantly since last

[1] From a little book published for the Italian Red Cross Society and edited by Signora Armilda Pons, by whose kind permission the above extracts are given.

evening: my thoughts go out to you, to the beloved sisters, to Maria, and to all whom I knew and loved.

"'I must conduct you there at whatever cost!' and we are going, *Babbo caro*, *Mamma mia bella*, — we are hastening against the barbarous enemy, and on my lips shall be your names, my heart shall beat for all without giving them name,—for my beloved sisters, for dear Edgardo, for my little Ophelia.

"With *so* much love,—Your TULLIO."

. . . .

The following letter is from a volunteer of barely eighteen years of age who formed one of the so-called "Companies of Death" to whom we owe much in the desperate undertakings of this war. It was written in October 1915 from along the Isonzo, and was addressed to the father of the young man:—

"At 3.15 precisely came the order to advance. My lieutenant and I, my friends Baldacchini and Croce were together. From our trench we rushed with bayonets to assault that of the enemy, running all the way, and the lieutenant was the first to leap over the wires and to enter the Austrian trench.

"Of what happened next I have a confused recollection. I seem to have dreamed. It was like the end of the world. The enemy ran, crying for help. I saw my most intimate friends and my fellow soldiers fall near me, one after the other. I found myself amongst four of our dead . . . and an Austrian who seemed dead also, but when I lifted from over his head a sandbag with which I wanted to protect myself, he got up and saluted me, smiling. He was wounded by a bullet in the arm, and I gave him a dressing

to put on it. I gave him bread and chocolate, too, and kept him under my surveillance. After having eaten with great calmness, he began to smoke a pipe, while near me Baldacchini and Croce fell wounded.

"Dear parents, you cannot imagine my state of mind. The shells, the bombs, and a thousand other devilish things exploded over us, killing and wounding, and the great dust and an insupportable smell made me cough terribly. One could see nothing. I wept with rage when some of my dearest friends implored me for help and I could not relieve them in the slightest degree. Among my other troubles, my gun refused to act any more. My lieutenant was wounded by a ball, and I and another took him to have his wounds dressed. During this trip, I lost my balance and all three of us fell on the barbed wire. This gave me a bruise on the right leg which will be well in a few days.

"Now I am in the Red Cross Hospital, but it is nothing. I wished after we had brought my lieutenant to the dressing station to return to the scene of action, but I could not walk, so they sent me here to the hospital."

. . . .

From another letter of the same, describing the same attack:—

"My friends, Baldacchini and Croce, and I placed ourselves near our lieutenant, who, with his watch in hand, was counting the minutes until the hour fixed for the attack. In those instants, my dear parents, I saw and remembered everything. I saw thee, Mamma, at work in thy usual seat, and thee, Papa, going about the shop as usual, and a sob closed my throat. But it was only for an instant; the voice of the lieutenant called me back to reality. He gave the order for the assault. I said within

my heart, 'Farewell, Mamma,' and I leaped out of the trench with the others. I grasped my gun nervously as we ran. Passing over the barbed wire I reached the enemy's trench with my companions, with the dreaded cry of '*Savoia*,' and as we planted our feet there the first to fall near me was my loved companion, a certain volunteer, Curci. On our arrival, the Austrians greeted us with a hail of shots, but afterwards, seeing that they were lost, they threw down their weapons and surrendered, holding up their arms."

. . . .

From an officer of infantry to his father:—

"The tranquillity of to-day has been interrupted by a slight incident. A soldier of my platoon has made a prisoner, a fine young man, tall and strong, who had attempted to escape but who was immediately stopped by another of my soldiers, who intimidated him. This soldier is a big man with a beard which would frighten any one.

"The incident has brought again to my attention the kindness and generosity of our men. Imagine that after having walked two hours and a half over the mountains to get his ration, my soldier voluntarily offered *the whole* of it to his prisoner, and that with all the appetite which one gets up here, and he went without anything to eat himself for twenty-four hours. Note, too, that he never mentioned this generous action by even a word.

"It was perhaps unnecessary to treat an enemy so well, but it is fine to find such sentiments in a simple peasant."

. . . .

From a corporal of infantry to his father:—

"After many hours of continuous bombardment of the

enemy's position, began the conflict in which I took part, and from which I have come out miraculously unharmed. We began at eleven in the morning (on that celebrated mountain which dominates the fortifications of Tolmino). The companies of my regiment, after cutting the barbed wire, threw themselves on the assault of a very steep peak. The Austrians were coming out from all sides, and with my machine-gun I opened an infernal fire and did great damage.

"There were terrible moments, dear Papa. I was not conscious of what I was doing. The more I killed, the more came rushing out. Meanwhile, by the help and protection of our machine-guns, our soldiers arrived up above, though under a continuous rain of the enemy's shells. The peak, the famous 'great trench,' as we call it, was taken; and we should have entrenched ourselves as quickly as possible in order to save the position, but we had no time, and were obliged to begin a fierce counter-attack immediately.

"At once I began another terrific fire, murderous for them, and we produced enormous losses among them; and then shells and shrapnel of the enemy began to fall around us in quantities.

"I have no words, dear Papa, to describe that moment: it is enough to say that I thought I died. The gun was shattered to pieces.

"Believe me, it was indeed a true miracle. Perhaps your prayers and those of Mamma saved me. The fact is that I had not even a scratch, and after we had secured the position we were received by our colonel, who gave us great praise. I felt immense satisfaction at that moment, but believe me, it was hardly earned.—*November* 1915."

. . . .

The last letter of Valentino Donati, a volunteer

of the Alpini, who fell on the rocks of the Tridentino, and written a few hours before his death to his family:—

"My dearest Ones,—In a few hours we are to move forward in an attack which must be conducted with extreme violence. The undertaking is particularly difficult, owing to certain conditions of the campaign.

"Perhaps my own sacrifice will be necessary, contributing in some way to the victorious result. There must be examples of courage, of self-abnegation, and of heroism, and I cannot fail to recognise this duty. The company which I shall lead will have to devote itself to the sacrifice, in order to facilitate the task of the others. I, with my companions, must dare all.

"But at this moment in which I reflect that perhaps I shall never more see the light of the sun which caresses me like a sweet farewell, and that perhaps I shall never more abide amongst you whom I love, it is my supreme consolation to send you all the tenderest and sweetest thoughts which I have of you. I hold you all in my heart.

"In the coming hour, my purest thoughts are for you all; for the greatness of my country, and for the joy of my death. Kisses, kisses and farewell.—Valentino."

. . . .

From the letter of an officer to his parents:—

"If I fall may it never enter your minds, my dear ones, that my end was accompanied by moral suffering. . . . No, I shall fall with a heart so rich in faith, in life, with my thoughts so intensely fixed on great things, and on those beings whom I love, that the happiest of men may envy me.

"I remember that one evening at the café there was a discussion on the question,—'In case of war, is the sacrifice of the artist, the scientist, or the author legitimate?' There were various opinions, but almost all concluded that those who were contributing to the greatness of the country in thought or art should be spared from the sacrifice of blood. The poet T—— and I were opposed to each other. The service of the country is a matter of conviction and choice, otherwise there should be no obligation. Each citizen in his own place should accomplish his own task and so contribute to his country's strength. When, however, she calls, there is for all *but one place;* and the first to respond should be the choicest of the people, for the sake of the value of their example. . . . *Art and science without conscience is nothing more than a vain travail of soul.*

"I have the consciousness that I have obeyed this high moral law in leaving you and my beloved studies to fight here on the edge of the world for the greatness of Italy.

"Return? How I long for it. My lips tremble at the mere thought of return to the sweet home which you have made so beautiful. . . .

"But if I die do not say, I beg you, that my life has been broken off. No; at thirty years of age I shall have finished my course as well as did Methuselah of happy memory.

"I am right, am I not?—Your ALDO."

. . . .

Captain Angelo Alessandro Bianchi, formerly *pretore* at Novi Ligure, who fell near Oslavia while conducting his company to an assault on the enemy, left behind him the following testament:—

"The War of Italian Independence.—32nd Division—125th Regiment of Fusiliers.—October 22nd, 1915.

"On the eve of an advance against the Austrian position and in the possibility of leaving there my life, I make the following deposition:—

"I die smiling, with the sacred names of God, country and family on my lips, together with that, beautiful and prophetic above all, the name of the first soldier of Italy, Victor Emanuel III. of Savoia, in my heart. I am happy to contribute these few drops of my blood to the attainment of the great national ideal, to the re-establishing the unwritten, historical, geographical boundaries of my country—the object of desire of my ancestors; of which I have dreamed from boyhood, followed with all my powers during my tempestuous youth, and now—as a man and father, in the habit of a magistrate and a captain—have reached at last.

"Ever blessed be my mother who bore me for this great adventure; blessed our invincible army, which made me one of its soldiers,—its enthusiasts.

"May the great new Italy live eternally, as also the brave and magnanimous House of Savoy, eternal as the sun. May their children be strong, generous, and loyal, as were the Holy Martyrs of liberty, as the wonderful soldiers of this last War of Independence are examples of the noblest abnegation and sacrifice. Their names imperishably and indelibly engraved on the hearts of coming generations, will be their most beautiful garland of glory.

"Then offer, ever, flowers to them, oh my dearest wife, oh my two adored children, oh dearest Italian brothers! This is my testimony of blood and of death. Honour to the 125th Fusiliers, whose unstained banner I kiss with tears. *Evviva Italia.*"

Mario Fusetti, sub-lieutenant of infantry, a few hours before he fell, wrote the letter which is given below, together with the message of the lieutenant-colonel of his regiment:—

"To All the Non-commissioned Officers:—In order that it may be read to all the soldiers of the regiment, I send, with a heart profoundly touched, the beautiful letter written by Sub-Lieutenant Fusetti a few hours before he took part in the attack of Sasso di Stria.

"May they all be inspired by the beautiful and sacred words of our dear fallen friend who in serene calm sacrificed himself for the greatness of the country.—The Lieutenant-Colonel, *Commander of the Regiment.*"

"*16th October* 1915.

"With a firm hand I am expressing in the words which follow, not my last wishes, but these my thoughts which I should like to have survive my death for those who love me.

"I am on the eve of an action of difficulty, on whose result depends in great part a victory.

"In me and in my companions in arms an abundance of faith is not lacking; whether the result be for life or for death, it will be worthy of our unchangeable love for the country.

"If I fall, Papa, Gina, my Angiolo, friends and relations who love me, do not shed tears for me: I have loved death, the beautiful death. Do not think of me with my breast torn, in the last agony; but as in the fervour of a heroic enthusiasm vanishing into a supreme blessedness.

"I have dreamed in the wanderings of thought of the great questions of humanity and of the universe, of a future of perfection in moral and physical things.

"I have loved my country in all her divine beauties, in all her traditions: I have loved above everything Humanity.

"And because this war has seemed to me necessary, I have fought willingly and serenely.

"That my poor body may rest where I fall is my desire; buried with the honours of war among my fellow soldiers.

"That my sacrifice, humble among so many glories, should spur on others, if there are any indifferent here, and give courage to the coward.

"My father, my Gina, my Angiolo, relations, friends, you who fill my heart (together with the venerated memory of my mother), lift up your hearts.

"With calm affection, with faith, in the peace of a Christian soul, on the field of battle, in the presence of the enemy whom I do not fear, I sign myself—MARIO."

Colonel Perugino Bartoli, commanding a regiment of Bersaglieri during the advance into the *irredento* territory, received the following letter:—

"LIVORNO, *Oct.* 1915.

"HONOURED SIGNOR COLONEL,—In order that we may not be entirely unknown to you, we introduce ourselves as friends of little Mimi.

"We have lived here for four years, and before that in Florence, but we were born in Tiarno di Sopra.

"We know that the glorious regiment of the —— Bersaglieri is in Valdampola and has by now probably advanced beyond that, and therefore we apply to you, hoping that you will gratify a wish of ours.

"With our small savings (though it has been necessary for Papa and Mamma to help) we are sending you by

parcels post the Italian tricolour, and we beg that it may soon wave over our old and glorious home in Tiarno di Sopra, number 96 in Val di Ledro.

"We call it glorious because it is full of precious memories. In 1848 it was used as a hospital: in 1866 Giuseppe Garibaldi was established there with his staff.

"Salute the dear and beautiful mountains for us. We hope that we may return there soon, and when we pass through the pleasant streets of our village we will remember our brave soldiers and we will call to mind the heroes who have redeemed us with their courage and by their blood. *Evviva l'Italia!*"

It is unnecessary to say that the wish of the children was carried out on the arrival of the flag at its destination, and that it floated over their old home.

. . . .

From the many voices of the war, what fragments there are that should not be lost. Here are two or three of them:—

"DEAR FATHER,—Do not think that I love war; I long almost too much for peace. There are so many fathers and mothers who are mourning their dear sons. You must tell my mother to be brave, and say that though these tears which we shed may not be perhaps for joy, yet they may be tears of rejoicing for the greatness of our beautiful Italy, for which we are fighting to liberate her sons from a barbarous enemy.

"All the world is against the German. Remember these words, 'The German rod shall never rule Italy.'—EZIO."

The young man who wrote this fell, fatally wounded, two days later.

From the driver of an automobile, obliged to pass a night in the snow on account of the heavy drifts blocking the road. Cannon were rumbling near all night long:—

"Such cold, Mamma! How we suffered! However, not a complaint came from our lips. We all realise that we are soldiers with one common purpose, one ideal only and for this we are ready to give even our lives. We are proud of the uniform which we wear, and we are willing to make any hard sacrifice.—1915."

. . . .

From a husband to his wife:—

"Now if I am able to come back, there must not be any more quarrelling as there was once: we must love one another, we must love one another always. If we have children we shall know how to bring them up by the example of our affection, and surely this time of present suffering and sacrifice shall remain in our memories like a poem, a time of which thou and I shall be equally proud."

. . . .

There are so many little stories and touching incidents of the war that it is difficult to make a selection. But this which follows is so simple and natural that one cannot leave it out. It appeared in the *Corriere dei Piccoli* of Milan:—

"Bruno's Present.

"Rossi, who tells this little story, is an automobilist who makes long trips up and down from the front, doing commissions of all sorts. During one of these trips he stopped before a hut within which some soldiers were

warming themselves before an improvised fireplace. In the mild warmth, in that brief hour of tranquillity after long hours of fighting, the men were giving themselves up to thoughts of home. Each one of them remembered another chimney corner, where those he held most dear were waiting and fearing for him. Amongst these soldiers perhaps the most pensive, the most homesick of all was an Alpino, a fine type of man with great blue eyes and honest face; a man accustomed to fatigues and to hard weather, hardened to the cold and to the firing of the enemy. The men were talking quietly, while outside the big guns of a battery were rumbling.

" 'We shall have that music all night,' said one of the soldiers to Rossi, 'and if *he* speaks, to-morrow there will be work to do.'

" 'But how? You came back here only a few days ago, and must you go back up there already?'

" 'Yes, Lieutenant C—— says that we must make an assault on a trench to-morrow night.'

" The big blonde soldier aroused himself from a reverie, and asked with interest:

" 'Tell me, when are you going down?'

" 'To-morrow.'

" 'Listen, then, will you do me a favour? See, I have a letter to post, and here,' he drew out a parcel, 'I have something for my Bruno, my son: it is a present I want to make him.'

" With his huge, hard hands gently untying the ribbon which went around the parcel (God knows how he had procured the ribbon up there) he opened the paper, which had been taken from some other package, and showed me a German *kepi*.

" 'I had promised my son a present, but from here there

was nothing to send. The other day, however, when the 3rd made the advance to drive out those "big potatoes" from the fort, I went to have a look around, and under a basket I found this affair. Bruno is death on Germans, and who knows how pleased he will be to have this! If you could see him! *Such* big eyes! Strong, healthy, clever. If he were twenty years old, he would be worth more than I. How many blows his godfather's boys have had to take from him when they take the part of Austrians in their play! . . .

"'Some days ago, I went home on leave. He had never seen me dressed as a soldier, and when I found him in the courtyard he began to threaten me with his fists. I understood: he had not seen me for six months. I took him in my arms and devoured him with kisses, and the little shrimp began to cry, for he did not know me. I said:—

"'"But I am thy father, I tell thee. Dost thou not see?" He screamed so loud that he brought his mother out, and she too began to cry. I assure you that it was a long time before I could calm them both. But when his mother had persuaded him that I was his father, that shrimp wanted me to teach him to be a soldier and how to make war, and he climbed up on the chairs and tables and rolled off. Every once in a while he would come to me with a bump on his head, and when I said, "Bruno, what has happened to thee?"—"Papa, I am an Alpino, and I fell off the bed, and I am wounded," and then with an air of importance, "But now I am well; I have been in the field hospital."'

"The big soldier smiled, though his voice choked, and he continued, as he consigned the parcel and a letter to me:—

"'Will you please bring this down for me, and do everything possible to forward it? And place this letter in the

box. It is for my wife. To-morrow, when you return, let me know what you have spent.'

"At that moment the door opened, letting in a breath of cold air and a little snow. It was the sergeant.

"'Rossi, it is time we were going.'

"'I am coming immediately, sergeant. Good-bye and good luck,' to the soldier. But he came outside with me to the camion and charged me not to forget. 'Good-night, *Buon viaggio*,' and he remained a little time by the side of the road, waving his arm as we went down, while I was thinking of the words of before, 'To-morrow there will be work to do.'

"Two days later, passing the same place, I inquired about him from a soldier of his company.

"'Who? Rampini? He is down there at —— in the field hospital. He was wounded in the attack of last night. However, it does not seem to be serious,' added the soldier, seeing the impression which his words had made on me.

"When I came down to —— I stopped the machine at the corner, and hurried to the hospital. I arrived just in time, for they were putting him on an auto-ambulance. He saw me, he smiled and saluted.

"'Have you sent the present to Bruno?'

"'Yes, yesterday evening.'

"'You will see him again soon, and when you do kiss him for me.'

"'Yes,' I muttered. 'Hurry and get well,' and I escaped. There was such a miserable lump in my throat."

"*November* 10, 1915.

"SIGNORA,—This morning a parcel reached me which you kindly sent to me, containing a pair of drawers, a

flannel shirt, and gloves, which I am most pleased to have, for they were greatly needed. I thank you truly for your kind thought and for your good heart. I will pray the Lord that he will keep you in good health, as also your husband, who is fighting with devotion, as he has done all along, against the vile enemy, the Emperor, to liberate our brothers from the talons of the Double-Headed Eagle, which one does for the love of our Mother Country and for our King.

"Excuse me for my bad writing, I am not educated, for I was born poor, but I write what I do with willingness and love, therefore again I thank you from my heart, and I salute you, together with your beloved husband, and I will pray the good God that he will grant us his aid.—I am your most devoted soldier, CASINI FRANCESCO.

"I hope soon to see you, that I may kiss your precious hands.

"*Viva il Re* and our *Patria*.
"*Viva* the beautiful England."

From another letter of the same:—

"You ask how many times I have been in battle? The first time was the 22nd August, then the 20th, 21st, and 22nd October, and always with the complete victory of our arms, although it was in a rough and ugly part of the front. I should like to tell you more, but duty calls me, and I must end by thanking you for the things you sent me. . . . I will not fail to pray the good God that he will keep you and your husband in good health, and hoping for the complete victory of our arms and of the Quadruple Alliance.

"*Viva* our King and our *Patria*.
"*Viva* the Quadruple Alliance with the Victory."

The next letter is from the brother of this brave, simple soldier and tells its own story:—

"VIAREGGIO, 21 *December* 1915.

"GENTILISSIMA SIGNORA,—With great grief I announce to you the death of my brother, which occurred on the field of honour the 28th of November, and twenty days afterwards we received the confirmation of his death. You know how great has been my grief and the grief of all my family.

"I thank you very much for all that you did for him, the good God will recompense you. I hope you will have a happy Christmas.

"I salute you with respect, together with all my family. —The bathing-master, CASINI GUIDO."

These letters were written to an English lady who had been very kind to this soldier.

CHAPTER VI

CHIEFLY MOTHERS AND SONS—GIOSUÈ BORSI AND ENZO VALENTINO

Letters from the Mothers

"To Captain R. L.,—I do not know how to write, signor captain, for when I was a girl there were no schools. My grandson (who is in the sixth grade at school and always is marked ten in his composition) is writing for me.

"I am the mother of Italo, your orderly. It was destined that he should die. It was much better, however, that he should die for the country than that he should end in some other way, perhaps badly. . . . The times are evil in these days, and the mothers are always in fear for their sons. Then, too, we thank God, Italo has had honour; he has been buried by his companions and the priest has given him absolution. On the other hand, how many poor Christians remain who are exposed to the wind, to the sun, or worse still are in the hands of savage beings who torment them.

"Was it you, signor captain, who gave my name to those gentlemen who came to bring me money because Italo is dead? It was not from pride, nor to mortify any one, but I could not take it. You see, for me to take that money would be like having sold my son. I have *given* my son.

"His father also did not wish it. He is a patriot: his uncle was also and was kept in prison for twenty years under the Bourbons. Then, too, we are not poor. My

husband is clever at his carpenter's trade, and I am a washerwoman; our health is good, our daughters are growing up, and I have another son, younger than Italo. Of Italo I have a fine photograph, which I keep at the head of the bed under the Madonna. . . .—ASSUNTA P."

. . . .

This letter was sent to a lady, a visitor at the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, who had assisted a young Sardinian soldier, Francesco Mureddu, who, having been gravely wounded during an assault on the trench of the enemy, died a few days afterwards in the same hospital. In this the mother of the poor Mureddu sends from her little town in Sardinia her thanks for the sympathetic care given to her son, for the roses which had been scattered over his grave, and asks for the lock of his hair left with the lady. The sons of Sardinia have been of the bravest. Their mothers are proved to be no less so:—

"GENTILISSIMA SIGNORA,—I have received your letter. In my grief it has done me great good to know that a loving woman comforted with maternal care the last days of my Francesco. Not I, with my poor words, but God will reward your kindness and that of your husband towards the poor wounded.

"Francesco, the youngest of my five sons whom I have given for the greatness of the *Patria*, is the first who has descended into the tomb, after having shed his blood in this war. Of the other four, two are wounded and one has been in Libya for three years, and of him I have news but seldom. The other is still at the front and still well, and may God preserve him to me! You can understand, dear

signora, how my heart must ache in thinking of my idols.

"You who are perhaps a mother will be able to understand me. And to you and your husband I shall ever be grateful for the kind thoughtfulness which you had for my poor soldier. The roses with which you have covered him will bloom in a distant day over your tombs, and the steps with which you accompanied him to the cemetery will advance you on your way towards Heaven, which will surely know how to reward you. Dear signora, send me the lock of hair which you have kept, so that I may impress upon it the kiss which I was not able to impress upon the brow of my Francesco. But if you will permit me, since I do not know how to make you any other recompense, will you keep part of it in remembrance of a noble action, and say to whoever asks you whose it is that it is that of a little Sardinian hero whose mother has been greatly comforted by your charity."

. . . .

Letter from the Duchess —— in answer to a letter of condolence:—

"I thank you, sir, I ought not to be pitied. Death, which has entered so many homes of Italy, has knocked among the first at my door. This preference exalts me. In the closed chamber of my soul I heard the terrible command to the mothers: 'Take now thine only son whom thou lovest and offer him upon the altar.' I answered not: he answered, my loved one, in his ardour and greatness. I weep now, but I weep as one who hopes."

. . . .

A Calabrian mother:—

"Four brave soldiers from the district of Bagnara were

assigned to the service of the kitchen before their regiment left for the front. Hearing this, the four eager young men said that they desired to be fighters and not cooks. Considering the very decided manner in which they made known their patriotic ardour, their request was at once granted.

"Yesterday there arrived for the mayor of Bagnara a telegram from the military authorities in which was announced the death of one of these four young men who had not wanted to go in any other capacity but as soldiers. He had died of wounds while he was fighting bravely at the frontier.

"The mayor, as soon as he had received the message, sent to call the mother of the dead soldier. She was a strong, brave peasant woman. She understood immediately that the mayor had some sad news to give her, and she begged to know the truth at once in regard to her son.

"'My son is dead, is he not?' she said, seeing the mayor's hesitation. 'I am happy that he has died for the *Patria* and the King.' Saying this, the emotion of her heart was too much for this generous woman, and she burst into tears. Then taking courage, she added:—

"'For the rest I have a son-in-law at the front; I am certain that he will avenge my beloved son.'

"This episode has awakened at Bagnara a strong sense of pride for the courage of our women, mothers, wives, and sisters, well worthy of our noble soldiers who go to fight and when necessary to die for the *Patria*."

. . . .

From the *Cordelia*, a weekly magazine:—

"Let us fix our gaze on the Supreme Light. We are too small and human to judge, but we know that God does not

permit evil except for the bringing about of good. We cannot say but that the war was necessary to call us from the debasing idolatry of material things to the worship of things spiritual and eternal; neither can we say that the war is useless because around us there are some men and women who persist in indifferent and low ideals, and have eyes *for the passing things only.*

"But we know, oh well we know that thousands of men are sacrificing themselves and all that they hold dear, and are supporting the greatest fatigues and the most torturing sufferings and are giving their lives without a lament: we know that thousands of women are working, weeping and waiting, hoping and praying.

"What else can this be if not the dawn of a brighter day?—SORIA VAGGI REBUSCHINI."

. . . .

The war has brought to the front many a young man, brought up to a life of study and peaceful pursuits, accustomed to the company of students and artists and literary folk, who has developed an extraordinary amount of patriotic enthusiasm and proven himself a worthy soldier of his King's army.

Among these must be mentioned the young Florentine, Giosuè Borsi, whose talent and poetical achievements were making him a name, and whose remarkable religious development and fervour marked him one apart from the ordinary ways of thought. He was one of the volunteers, giving themselves to their country, in the first white heat of enthusiasm which swept all before it, and for his country he gave his life, as he hoped and wished

to do. He fell in November 1915, in the battle of Zagora. The last letter to his mother, written on the night before the engagement, is one of the most wonderful and beautiful of farewells, full of tenderness and pathos. That, together with others of his, may be read elsewhere. It is already printed in English, and has been made the subject of lectures not only in Italy but in Paris.

After his death a friend said of him as a student:—

"But Giosuè Borsi was never satisfied. He loved with passion our classics, the purest of our language, the conciseness of the Latin authors, the wealth of our golden prose, and he had for Dante an especial worship founded on profound knowledge, which was not unknown in high places, so that when he was only a little past twenty he was called to the honour of explaining the Divine Comedy from the *Cathedra* of Or San Michele in Florence."

This is an honour accorded only to great and well-known scholars, in pursuance of an ancient custom prevailing in Florence.

At a commemoration of Borsi in Florence the speaker said:—

". . . So, I repeat, we wish that Dante would recompense the young hero, Dante, the volume of whose poems was the inseparable treasure which Borsi carried with him always, and which was brought to his mother all stained with his blood. There is a symbol in this mortal wound which crimsoned the pages of our greatest poet, a symbol of vigour and of faith."

"The remaining officers of the battalion to which

Borsi belonged" (says a friend) "have been for two months and a half witnesses to the serene courage, the indomitable enthusiasm and burning patriotism which were his; courage, enthusiasm, and patriotism which had further proof and a more beautiful manifestation in his heroic death. But to die is the affair of an instant. Borsi knew how to live. He was a hero in the last moment of his life, but during all the period of his military activity he was an excellent officer, who cared for and loved his soldiers; he was ready for any duty, no matter how fatiguing, and while fulfilling more than his obligations, he brought to everything an ardour which was a spur to others. . . . To his soldiers he often spoke with warmth, urging them not to be merely blindly obedient to him as a superior but to look upon him as a guide. In all difficult enterprises, in undertakings most dangerous, he showed his scorn of danger. From his serene gaiety every one drew consolation and comfort. Thanks principally to him the mess of our battalion was famous for its cheerfulness, good humour, and vivacity. On all occasions he knew how to bring out a joke or a verse exactly suitable, and he would give courage to any who were ever a little sad. . . . He was among the youngest and the most esteemed, his ability was put to proof by official calls upon him, and he was always able to satisfy them. . . . He was a true and noble representative of the volunteer, who makes up by his good will for the deficiency of military knowledge and experience."

Borsi fell as he was leading on his men and throwing a hand bomb which was responsible for the death of several of the enemy. He himself was wounded in the breast and died at once. In

one of the last letters which he wrote to a friend he said, speaking of the time and manner of his death, that he was prepared for the great journey, at peace with the world and himself, that he had arranged everything, and that in moving towards the assault he could see also his liberation. And he goes on:—

"It is then a good moment for me. . . . I swear before God,—and these are not the hours in which one perjures oneself,—that I shall do nothing to hasten my fate. Thank Heaven I am not a mocker or a reckless, unduly excited person, nor a maniac. I regard prudence, after courage and a disdain of danger, as the first duty of a good soldier. I shall not commit any imprudence nor act of madness, I shall endeavour to be calm, cool, and the master of myself, I will do all that is humanly possible to prevent my presentiment from coming true. If, however, God wills that I should fall, I hope also I shall be strong and smiling, and that I may do my duty to the utmost. And I tell thee . . . that I shall be happy in having given my life to the *Patria* and more happy still if my sacrifice is not in vain."

. . . .

About this time another student volunteer fell, one also whose life was very short when the enemy's bullet found him; Enzo Valentini, of noble lineage, a young man from Perugia, who enlisted with the ardour of youthful patriotism and the mind of a poet and artist when he was but seventeen. Other pens have worthily written of him and his short and beautiful career as a soldier. English readers will have heard of him. Here, however, are reproduced three of his letters, which show in some

degree what he was, and why his memory must never fade. They are taken from a little collection made from his letters sent home. It is a wonderful little book, full of charming descriptions of scenery and of the flowers and animals of the Alpine woods and meadows. He was an ardent nature student and life in the mountains furnished him with continual interests. Many of the letters are illustrated by drawings from his pen.

He died bravely as he had lived. He was advancing with the others in high spirits. In his cap he had placed a sprig of edelweiss, which he said "would bring him fortune."

His companions carried him with infinite caution (for they were under heavy fire) to a place of safety. His wound was dressed and he fell into a sleep from which he never woke.

As his captain wrote:—

"Poor Enzo! What a heart of gold! I do not know how to hold my peace in regard to his glorious end! Yet so fate had willed! To die thus is to live for ever!"

. . . .

This letter was written immediately after Enzo's arrival at his destination. He was with the regiment commanded by Colonel Beppino Garibaldi (in which were the other four Garibaldi brothers), the 51st Infantry of Perugia, destined for the Dolomites:—

"*July* 18. Morning.

"Dear Mamma,— . . . Since the letter I posted at Montevarchi . . . thou wilt not have received any news

other than some postcards from the stations through which I have passed. I take up my story from that point.

"On arriving at night in Pistoia, the train stopped to change engines and was shunted about until dawn. . . . I amused myself in looking at those who slept and those who were awake and those who talked in their sleep.

". . . The road from Pistoia to Bologna is enchanting, passing through sweet Tuscany, by wooded hill tops, mountain sides scattered with villas, cypresses, chestnuts, cultivated fields, covered with blue mist in the oblique light of the calm morning. At Bologna a long, tiresome stop. . . . From Bologna to Padova is truly beautiful. . . . Ferrara dark under the noonday sun, and the yellow Po which rolls in its lazy whirlpools the plants and earth which the melting of the ice has brought down to the coasts from the far-away Alps,—all passes by as the train rushes onwards, losing itself in the shadeless hour in the azure light of the distant horizon.

"At every station of importance, clouds of young ladies assail the train, offering wine, cigars, postcards, cooling drinks, medical necessities with an admirable willingness."

"30 *July* 1915.

"Dear Mamma,—Yesterday I did not write, for I had not any postcards and was not in the mood to write a letter. . . .

"The night of the 27th, from eleven until three of the following morning, I was out with the patrol, not on scouting service but simply to stop at an advanced point and to remain there all night more or less as sentinels. We went far past our most advanced wire, and seating ourselves on the grass before the position of the enemy, we remained there watching until three in the morning.

The immense fields descend in steep slopes towards the valley, at whose bottom the cataract roars without ceasing, dark against the pale sky veiled by mist and in the light of the moon. Through the valley pass without rest the light and silent clouds, now thick, now transparent, now dark, now illuminated by the moon which passes over them with its greenish light.

"From time to time, immense, black, solemn in the serene sky, crowned with stars like diamonds, the mountains appear between the rifts in the torn mists, soon to be covered again by other mists, as sometimes in our conscience loaded with mist the central Idea appears,—a warning and a consolation.

"28.—After the first ration, Betti, who is my inseparable companion, and I went to wash at the stream. It is a splendid day full of sunlight, warm like our April days.

"A rush of more intense life comes hurrying on the wind to despoil the fields over which fly (an unusual thing) a crowd of Alpine butterflies, all little and quick, with an indescribable nervousness and hurry to hover over and to drink from the flowers which makes one almost think they are afraid that they cannot finish their affairs before the valleys begin to send up the mist towards the heights. Through the meadows and beside the bushes the brook runs singing, and the enormous, serene mountain watches over this crowd of little lives, each of which glows on the same dark background of mystery on which it is outlined. With these thoughts in my mind as I was washing my shirt, I felt myself near to God.

"Towards evening the mist comes up again from the valley, and an animated discussion between our artillery and that of the enemy begins; the enemy's shrapnel explodes very near, but our tents are well protected

between the rocks, and we eat our chocolate with impunity during the cannonade. . . .

"The life is most gay. The thing which one eats most willingly and on which one spends much is chocolate. Yesterday Lellè invited me to dinner. Here *everybody* loves me, and I am treated with great kindness.

"I sleep well. I have become completely accustomed to the cold. . . . Kiss Papa, Carlo, and the grandparents, and give thy blessing to thy son,—ENZO."

. . . .

"15 *October.*

"DEAR MAMMA,—To-day we have again had the opportunity to observe a bombardment from near by. I was on guard in the hut, towards noon, when the first of 210 bombs exploded, probably at the bottom of the pass, on the hill which faces the lake. The noise is deafening; when the bomb explodes it throws up an enormous column of stone, earth, and clods within a thick black cloud of smoke, which on dissipating shows a large crater and a chaos of overturned earth and of snow blackened by the smoke.

"To the first shock followed other fourteen, which shook all the wall around the fort in construction without damaging it, by good luck; moreover, as though there were something protecting us, the two shells which fell near us did not explode. The third blew up at twenty metres from the hut and I saw it very well;[1] it is a horrible and beautiful sight not to be forgotten. After this shock I retreated behind a rock, by the side of the hut, in safety. Many projectiles exploded near our field artillery, which continued firing imperturbably at that cursed observatory which is the cause of all this confusion. Then

[1] Enzo was really in great danger here.

our field batteries opened fire again, hidden behind one of the rocks of M——. The small cannon of the enemy responded, the bombs continued to rain from the sky at long intervals. The wind came up and whistled through the rocks, and the roaring, the buzzing, the noise of the explosions drowned its voice. The heavens were convulsed, the air trembled, filled with a bitter odour of war, the mountain resounded infuriated, and the stones and pieces of shells fell right over our shelter. Then all ceased, the noble austere silence of the immortal mountain extended again over the convulsed valley. No damages. Forty-five thousand *lire* thrown into the insensible ground which will give them burial in the hay of a coming peaceful summer. Now that it is passed (the mountain trembled but my heart did not fear) I am glad to have lived through this moment of violence, and to be able to describe it.

"It is cloudy and has stopped snowing. The mildness of the air melts the snow and the water sings among the rocks and loses itself in the mud which invades all the footpaths.

"The best of health, the morale of the highest.

"Kiss Papa and Carlo and bless thy son who thinks ever of thee.—Enzo."

. . . .

And here follows the last will of the brave boy, which was to be given to his mother in the event of his death:—

"The 27th of June 1915 before leaving for the war I leave

To my Mother

for the day of my bodily death my last wishes.

"Mammina Mia,—In a few days I shall leave for the front,—I am writing this salutation for thee which thou

shalt read only if I die, and it will serve also for Papa and for my brothers and for whoever in the world loves me. Since then, in the world, my heart offers ever to thee its best things for the love and the gratitude which it feels towards thee, to thee I wish to make known my last desires:—

"1.—Three, thou knowest, have been the joys of my earthly life: Poetry, Art, and the Sciences.

"In my laborious solitude my soul sought its way by means of Nature and Art. Of these researches I wish that there should remain in thy faithful hands some keepsake, some material object, which will remind thee what was the life of my soul while it was the prisoner of my body. For this I leave thee:

"(1) My dear books, those in which the Heart sings, in which the Spirit inquires, those in which the Soul comprehends the Universe.

"(2) My collection of insects, which have been worth so many hours of pure joy to me. Take care of them so that the moths will not destroy them; for them the moth is like the worm to the body; it is the end. I leave thee also the catalogue, without which the collection has no value.

"(3) All my artistic attempts, drawings, water-colours, pastels, oils, etchings, with their plates, and also the etchings and original drawings of other artists which I possess. Remember that Art has been one of my greatest joys.

"(4) All the pretty trifles which adorn my rooms and fill my drawers,—bookmarks, vases for flowers, paper weights, my clothes,—in short, everything which belonged to me, and also the *tools of the trade*, from the microscope to the colours.

"All these things I should like to have thee bring into

my room at Laviano; and there distribute them as it pleases thee best.

2. "Many persons have been fond of me: to each of these wilt thou give a trifle which belonged to me for a keepsake, a little thing of no value selected by thee from the things which thou valuest least? I wish that to them also should be left something of the friend who has disappeared to ascend ever like the flame, beyond the clouds, beyond the flesh (*et ultra!* thou rememberest my motto?), in the sun, in the Soul of All.

"I include, therefore, a list of names.

"3. Try if thou canst not to weep much for me—think that, even if I do not return, I am not dead for all that. It, the inferior part of me, the Body, suffers, is exhausted, it dies. I, no. I, my Soul, I cannot die, because I am from God, and to God I must return. I was created for joy, and through joy, which is at the foundation of every grief, to the Joy eternal I must return. If I was for a time a prisoner of the body, it was not because I was less eternal; my bodily death is a liberation, it is the beginning of the true life, it is the return to the infinite. Therefore, do not weep for me. If thou shouldst think of the immortal beauties of the Ideal to which my soul has wished to sacrifice my body, thou wouldst not weep. And if thy deep mother-heart must weep, then pour out thy tears: they will be holy, always, the tears of a mother. May God take account of them; they shall be stars in thy crown.

"Be strong, *Mammina.* From there, beyond, I say good-bye to thee, to Papa, to my brothers, and to as many as love me,—thy son who gave his life to fight against him who wanted to destroy the light.—ENZO.

"27 *June* 1915."

He died on October 23rd, 1915.

The following letter was written by a young lieutenant who, after a month in hospital recovering from a wound, had returned to the fighting line again, and was sent to a lady who had given him chocolate. It is included for the humour it contains, and the description of the hard life at the front, endured with gaiety:—

> "The Year of War, 1915, the 13th day of the month of November, by the grace of God and the will of '*Guglielmone*.'

"Dearest,—Hast thou never been present at one of these duets of gossip among the women of the people? One comes forward with an invective, the other responds with a reproach . . . a pause of two seconds: the first recommences with an accusation, a threat, to which the antagonist answers by an insult. Another pause, to bring forth another threat, a counter-threat, a challenge, a sackful of bad words . . . to finish with taking one another by the hair.

"It is like that here this morning.

"It is still early. The artillery has sounded the réveillé with two heavy explosions of mortars, and the Austrian sentries have fired some rhythmical shots. One of our 280s has called 'good-morning'; an unloading of guns, then the Austrian shells; finally, a general firing from all points.

"In between come pauses, during which we notice a drizzling rain which is falling.

"Where I am it is like a swing, each report makes this shelter tremble. There is a continual whistling of balls.

The shells arrive, and we must accept them, for we are not to reveal our hiding-place.

"I am back again in my place, and as soon as I saw my companions we made great rejoicing amidst a continual 'Hush, don't make a noise . . . this one is for us.' Rubbing my hands, I have brought salutations from the base lines, and I sang *sotto voce*, '*Vi ravviso o luoghi ameni.*' . . .

"I have a great affection for this mountain where we made festival on the 11th; I have an affection for these pine trees. If I live I will build a villa up here, and I will make it the object of my summer excursions. In these places one becomes a poet, but one can sing only in rolling verses, because the ground is all broken up and one cannot walk slowly.

"The stones here are everything, they serve for everything, for beds, chairs, tables, shelters, and murderous weapons—for when a shell comes along, the little pieces of stone which come in front serve also as projectiles. The only and special inconvenience is the water. It rains and rains and rains here. The Austrian God weeps always for the bad end of the Hapsburgs and perhaps the death of Don Ciccio. It always rains. But if it were only the rain to disturb us, that would be a very small matter; but the trouble is in its consequences, for the water, combining with this ferruginous earth, forms a red mud which plasters us from the ends of our hair to the points of our toes and gives me the idea of resembling an actor in a Greek tragedy.

"Good humour in general is not lacking. Here, however, one has not the spirit, not even I, to laugh continually, for it is not just to laugh in the presence of death. But when one is discontented, when home-sickness seizes us, then I come forward and amuse them.

"My mother is always melancholy; I write her of these my performances and she replies that from a boy I was always a rare joker, but that in war she supposes me to be entirely changed. But I am of this opinion: that here there is something for all, friends and enemies, rich and poor, gay and melancholy, young and middle-aged, therefore the best thing is to take it all cheerfully, and '*buona notte ai suonatori.*'[1]

"A Sicilian proverb says: '*Non dari vincitoria a la morti, vogliu cu l'occhiuzzi aperti*' (I do not mean to be conquered by death, but to meet him with my eyes open).

"At least if Death surprise me, he also will have the surprise of finding me happy, and I shall die with a smile on my lips.

"One of my companions is always wanting me to sing Bellini's aria :

> "'*Or sei pago, o ciel tremendo,*
> *Or vibrato è il colpo estremo . . .*
> *Più non piango, più non temo,*
> *Tutto io sfido il tuo furor.*
> *Morte chiedo, morte attendo,*
> *Che più tarda e in me non piomba? . . .*
> *Solo il gelo della tomba*
> *Spegner puote tanto amor* (but I say "*duol*").'

"I prefer the song:

> "'*Beviamo nei lieti calici.*' . . .

"It matters little whether I drink from a glass or from

[1] "Good-night to the musicians," or in other words, "All is finished."

a flask when I have it, or when one is without these, from a paper cup filled with rain water.

"I am almost at the end and I have not thanked you yet for the parcel of chocolate which was the cause of my writing all this nonsense.

"As soon as I received it I gave a little to my companions and the rest I have put carefully away in my knapsack, to enjoy it on favourable occasions. . . .

"Many thanks for your kind thought. I send you the most affectionate salutations, keeping myself at a respectful distance, for I am all covered with mud."

. . . .

The letter given below was written by a member of a family dear to Italy on account of its being that of the martyred patriot, Ciro Menotti, who was an ancestor of the writer. The act of bravery here described is worthy of being widely known:—

"Dearest Papa,—I will try to give you an account of my adventure as clearly as I can. Many hide from their dear ones the dangers to which they are exposed up here; but I, instead, believe it to be better to keep you informed as to my life in the war, and to let you share my anxieties and the fears I have (at times), and the deep joy which now I feel. You are all strong and of a temperament like mine, and I can perfectly well tell you the truth. I am sure that when you were all together last Sunday under the *loggia* reading the papers, you never imagined that your Giuseppe was on that camion of blazing bombs.

"On the 12th of this month I was on duty with the park bombardiers of ——, and we were carrying bombs from this park to the magazine of explosives which is situated behind Mount ——. During the morning I made two trips

and all went well. I had lunch and left about three o'clock, taking with me on the motor 540 bombs and the same number of rockets. With me there was a lieutenant of artillery employed on the explosives.

"Arrived at my destination, I stopped the machine about two metres from the depôt. . . . The soldiers of the artillery gathered around to unload the machine. All at once we heard a slight explosion under the car and we saw one of the artillerymen jump down and run. A rocket had blown up in his hand. The other men followed his example, and so did we. In less time than it takes to tell it the fire was communicated to the cover and to the other packages of rockets. A dense smoke began to envelop the machine, and we could hear the crackling of the flame and the whistling sound characteristic of fireworks. Pale and excited, the lieutenant and I stopped at a distance of about a hundred metres away. We were thinking of the magazine, only two metres distant from the machine, and that it would inevitably be lost if the blazing camion could not be moved away. Very soon the bombs would begin to explode and the magazine would then blow up. The lieutenant, terrified, implored me to keep away from the camion and not to do anything. Reading my intention in my face, he begged me with tears in his eyes not to go. I can still hear his cry, 'No, no, Menotti, do not go, do not go to die!'

"I thought of you all and of my duty, my heart beat fast, fast; one moment more and it would have been too late.

"Love for you all held me back,—the voice of duty urged me to take the risk. This last conquered! I ran towards the machine, followed by the cries of my companion, I started the motor, and I jumped on the seat.

The smoke took away my breath; I felt the heat of the flame and the crackling of the rockets against my back. After about eighty metres I got down from the machine, and considered the distance from the depôt. It was too little. Up on the machine again. I make another seventy metres, I get down and run to join my companion and together we take refuge in a ditch, from which we can keep the machine in sight, and which serves us also as a shelter. Then began the explosion of the bombs and we looked on at a great bombardment which lasted for an hour and a half.

"At five hundred metres from the camion, sentinels kept people from passing. Amidst the explosion of the bombs and the whistling of the rockets, my poor machine burned, and the flames and the dense smoke rose high above it.

"Meanwhile many officers and soldiers came hurrying, who were obliged to maintain a good distance. On Mount —— I could see the observatory of His Highness the Duke of Aosta, who had seen the fact and knew what had been done, and who, when he had asked who was the driver of the machine, sent for me.

"I reached the observatory after a climb of an hour and a half (the road is long and fatiguing), but he had been called away. However, I saw the officers of his suite and told them what had happened, and after they had praised me, they let me go.

"I came down and went to explain the affair to my commander, and I was complimented by all the officers present.

"The lieutenant of artillery above all understood how I had saved the depôt, which contained thousands and thousands of huge bombs, and many other explosives.

"When I got to —— all my fellow-soldiers and also the officers shook hands with me and congratulated me.

"In these last days I have indeed been very joyful and I feel perfectly happy in the knowledge that I did my duty, and I am proud of the admiration of my officers and my companions.—Thy affectionate GIUSEPPE."

CHAPTER VII

1916—BRAVE DEEDS AND SOLDIERS' THANKS

After these first months of the war the letters are fewer in number, for there is less that is new to describe and report and many times letters of later date are more or less repetitions of the earlier ones. And who knows how many of these young soldiers have laid down the pen as well as the gun forever, and sleep on distant soil or are languishing in hospital or in prison?

But we can read a few words here and there through the records of the long winters and the dreary days of snow and ice, when the men are snowed up in the Alps and fighting is impossible. The flame of patriotism burns brightly all the time and cold and discomforts are held of small account in the prospect of the summer of victory. The army of Italy has done great things in its waiting time and weeks of patient preparation, as well as in the days when *Avanti* is the word, and they move on to battle and glory.

A Father's Letter

In one of our hospitals the soldier Francesco Brunello of Turin died from wounds received in war. The father of the brave youth, in a letter of

thanks to the citizens of Rovigo for the honours paid to the body of his adored son, wrote:—

"ROVIGO, 12*th January* 1916.

"He died a young man, scarcely twenty, wounded to death a little before on the confines for which we contest. Rovigo, Venetian and Italian, gives glory to the mortal remains of a poor soldier as a symbol of all our fiery youth who, from the Stelvio to the sea, with stout heart and strong purpose, give for the country their hearts to Fate and the future to God.

"Venetian by birth and blood, I have known too well the German rod. I am therefore doubly proud of the sacrifice of my son, which unites me virtually with the other tragic hours in which my father was persecuted by the Austrian police.

"He amongst us is fortunate who dies for the greatness of Italy, if, as Rovigo has done for my child, every village shows him such honour and such sympathy."

. . . .

"DEAR MAMMA,—Thank you for the good things which you sent me for Christmas. I have divided the cakes, the sweets, with my companions, for on the field we are all equal, and so we feel that we are not far from home.

"My lieutenant is a fine type of man: he calls us 'my sons,' and yet he is more of a boy than we. Picture this to yourself. Last week we made such a long march, under a sun which burned like a furnace, that one of our companions, poor fellow, fell to the ground. He could not go any further. The lieutenant took off his knapsack, his belt, his gun, and took hold of him under the arm, saying, to make him laugh, 'Lazy one, lean on me,' and so he dragged him along for two hours. Afterwards I heard from his

orderly that, the night afterwards, when we were all snoring, dead tired, the lieutenant was obliged to stay awake to bathe his bleeding feet.

"Such acts are truly fine. We are ready to be killed to see him pleased, for he does everything for us, and is proud if his platoon conducts itself well.

"I can scarcely wait for the hour when I can return and help Papa with the planting; but if I should not return, *Mamma, mia buona*, pray for the soul of your most loving son, GIUSEPPE."

"At Trieste on the 24th of May 1916, being the anniversary of the breaking out of the war with Italy, an Italian flag was seen waving. In the depth of night some courageous person, daring death for a patriotic demonstration, succeeded in placing the tricolour on the walls of the castle which looks towards Piazza Goldoni. The banner was very large, and could be seen easily from all parts of the city. The fact, which in normal times would have been nothing unusual, and might have been repeated a hundred times, awakened now, the state of war being taken into account, an enormous impression. All the police force was set in motion to discover the author of the demonstration; some arrests were made, but the suspected persons were afterwards given their liberty as not being guilty: feverish inquiries are continuing to be made, but in vain.

"When one remembers that the author of this act was running the risk of the gallows, it is worth while to consider how this tricolour banner, raised on the anniversary of our war over the historic castle of Trieste, has a great moral significance. It is not then true, as the officious Austrian press affirms, that at Trieste, by the elimination of thousands and thousands of Italian patriots, there is not

remaining a single heart which palpitates for the holy cause of her redemption. There are some, and indeed there are many, who suffer in silence and, firm against the insults of the oppressors, wait the hour, sure of its coming, the hour of release."—From the *Tribuna, May* 30, 1916.

. . . .

This heartbreaking letter is from a soldier of Treviso, prisoner of the Austrians, and written part in the dialect of Treviso and part in Italian:—

"MAMMA MIA,—I do not know whether these few lines of mine will arrive: I have given them to a fisherman who comes to fish near me, and who cares for me because he sees how unhappy I am. I write these few lines to let you know that I am still living, but I do not know if I can hold out much longer, for if the war lasts much more and I shall have to remain here many months still, I shall die of hunger and fatigue.

"Oh, *Mamma mia*, if you could see to what your son is reduced! It would have been better if I had died that time when the Austrians took me at S. Michele, because at least you might have wept then, but by now everything would have been finished. And, instead, now they have sent me here to dig trenches on the shore of the sea, and when we can do no more they beat us, and the other day two of our number died. Oh, my mother, I pray you on my knees, go every evening to the church and pray for your son to the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary and to our great protector, Saint Anthony, because they alone possess the grace to save thy poor son who is dying of hunger and weakness, for one works fifteen hours a day, and they give us to eat three boiled potatoes, and then many beatings.

"The other day the fisherman gave me two fishes, and I

ate them raw, which at one time would have filled me with disgust, but when there is hunger everything is good.

"Yesterday I was thinking so much of my dear country and of my mother that many tears fell from my eyes, and the sergeant of the guards gave me a kick and wished to throw me into the sea. Oh, *Mamma mia*, when the weather is fine, I see far, far away across the sea a strip of land which they have told me is Italy, and I wished to throw myself into the sea and swim to return to my dear country. But the sea is so deep, deep, and I do not know how to swim, and I can do nothing but weep when I see how many of my companions are dying of hunger and privations and disease. And to think that at home they have their poor children who will never see them any more.

"Oh, dear mother, I wish that I could close my eyes for always so that I could not see any more of this wretchedness, but I think of thee and of my dear country, and of the hearth where in the winter we sat to tell stories, and I think of Angiolina whom I love so well, and whom I have promised to marry. And now I pray so much to the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary and to our Lord Jesus, who has had thorns on His head and has suffered so greatly, that He will give me strength to support this anguish. And also thou, my mother, pray for thy dear son that he may not close his eyes in this inferno, and that he may return home safe and sound. Keep well, my mother, and receive many kisses and embraces from thy unhappy prisoner son. Farewell, farewell.—Thy son ANTONIO.

"And salute my Angiolina, and she must not forget me but wait faithfully for me, and tell her also to pray always for me to the Blessed Virgin and to Saint Anthony of Padua. And salute Signor Tito and the nephews of Nena

and Bortolo, and let us hope that we may see each other again,—and yet more kisses to Angiolina.—*June* 1916."

From an Italian Prisoner interned in Austria

This letter was published in the *Corriere della Sera* and was written by an Italian, who, surprised by the war, was interned with many others in the concentration camp of Katzenau Linz. Although he is not a soldier, yet he expresses his most fervent wish to have been able to fight for his country, and his abhorrence of the cruel fate which made him a prisoner instead:—

"The situation of us prisoners is by now become insupportable. Already five eternal months have passed since I was interned. I should like to describe my long sufferings, but I have not the strength to write my long story, which is as full of adventure as a romance. The war has ruined all of us who were in Austria. Cursed be the day on which they found me; I have a right to curse my fate, for such tortures I did not deserve; I have not committed any crimes to justify such condemnation! And I am here, without news of my dear ones, far from all, ignorant of everything. What will happen to my family, to my adored mother? The thought of her tortures me above everything. She is old and poor, and at her age she will not have the strength to endure such pain.

"I do not know whether my brothers have gone to the war. How many hundred times should I have preferred to find myself in the war instead of here, to suffer doubly! But I was not in time. The frontier was closed suddenly and I remained in a trap. And what a trap! The long sufferings, the scarcity of food, indeed the hunger, which is

always insistent, the moral suffering, the lack of proper buildings for shelter, which lack everything indispensable to keep one in health—they are veritable pigsties—all these things have darkened my spirit, have made my existence insupportable, and have reduced me to a point where you would not recognise me.

"Here where I am there remains but one thread of hope: the hope that some good person near you, who has the position and the means to do it, will remember us, will think how many of us are suffering here, and will try in some way to relieve our misery. Some paper publishing this letter may, if nothing else, bring to the notice of our own people the real life which we are leading. Send my letter to the *Corriere della Sera*. Perhaps they will accept with pleasure this small amount of news from us so far away. And it is so difficult to send true and exact statements! If this only is successful—this which I send—confiding it to ——!

"The hardness of these Austrians against us is inconceivable. It is useless to ask anything, useless to present the most modest supplication in the most just circumstances: everything is refused to us, and sometimes, with a refinement of cruelty, they promise and deceive us at first and then take pleasure in denying what they have promised. I, in all the time I have been here, have not been able to obtain the slightest concession. Among other things, my wife at Trieste had begged to be imprisoned with me. The response to this request was favourable, but when we were looking forward to seeing each other again, they sent her to a concentration camp a long distance from this, and we must content ourselves with exchanging letters when that is possible.

"Our life here is worse than in a penitentiary. They

shower down punishments upon us for the slightest mistakes: and such punishments! It is enough to say that one of my friends was kept fasting for more than thirty-six hours in prison for having thoughtlessly thrown outside the door of our stall a little piece of white paper. It seems incredible! And together with this I could recount many other cases of bestial severity enough to make a long book. This is without saying that we are naturally obliged to work; that would be a small matter. But the trouble is that we are maltreated and prodded like beasts of burden: they take away from our pay, our food, our clothing: and our limbs, our strength, our courage are gradually failing us. We cannot endure more."

. . . .

The following letters are from two young men of Bagni di Lucca who volunteered early in the war when they were barely nineteen. Nearly all the young men from this beautiful mountain village offered themselves enthusiastically to their country's service without waiting to be called.

"1916.

"Dearest Papa,—Already twelve hours have passed since we began a great action, and I cannot do otherwise than write to thee.

"It is seven in the evening, and I have half an hour in which to eat, so I take this occasion to write.

"This morning at seven we received orders to fire, and the music began. I do not know how to describe it, but when thou knowest that on a front of about six kilometres there are 1000 cannon, and 300,000 soldiers, thou canst have an idea what such a bombardment would be. At

three this afternoon, the infantry came out from the trenches, and at four Monte Sabotino was in our hands.

"When the infantry advanced, the signal (the *Marcia Reale*) sounded, and that means that we must fire as fast as we can. It is still going on now. The cannon are as red as fire, we are dripping with perspiration, and we do not hear anything, we are deaf from the great reports, but we can support it all as long as we are going forward.

"Believe how thrilling it is! Thou shouldst have seen it, Papa, when the infantry planted the flag on the mountain; what a moment it was!

"The Austrians must be stupefied, for they are firing very little now.

"Let us hope for the best.—Receive many kisses from thy son, TULLIO."

. . . .

"COL DI LANA, 19 *March* 1916.

"DEAR GUSTAVO,—As we are on the eve of serious events, I feel a strong desire to write to you, for who knows whether I shall be able to send other letters? Arrangements are being made to go forward, and we must go. The task confided to my battalion will be difficult, but I think we shall know how to accomplish it. Yesterday, with honour, our battalion was passed in review by His Excellency, General Cadorna, who was much pleased with us.

"I should like to hear from you soon, dear Gustavo, I would have you all contented and tranquil. If you write me that you are all tranquil and not imagining trouble, it will be to me a great consolation.

"What then would it be to die, if no one should weep over our loss? One knows we are in war, some one must

pay with his own life for the victory, which will not be far off!

"When I think of that which is to be done, I feel such content, and it does me good to march against those wretched soldiers who all winter have been firing on us with such ferocity. But the thought that you, far away, are too anxious makes me sad. Not that I would not have you think of me; on the contrary, it pleases me, but I wish that your satisfaction would lie in the fact that you have a person dear to you fighting the eternal enemy with the other sons of Italy. If I die, I shall die at the head of my squadron and without fear, but first, however, I wish to make use of my bayonet, which during the winter months has grown rusty, and which, I assure you, I shall love. I write this to-day, because if during the actions there should be a long time when I could not write, what could I do, and you would know how to console my adored mother, and I commend her to you.

"I should like to have given you some particulars of the taking of Col di Lana, but I know that the papers have told of it with accuracy. However, you can imagine that it was a spectacle to make one shiver, thinking that when the top of the mountain blew up in the air there went with it the arms and men of the hangman, *Cecco Beppe.* Never shall I forget the evening of the 17th.—Receive a kiss from yours always, LUGIAI URBANO."

. . . .

From the same:—

"DEAR GUSTAVO,—I am well, as I hope you are. To-night I arrived at the camp, safe and sound, after having passed through every sort of adventure. They believed me dead or a prisoner, but, instead, I was buried up in the

midst of five or six men by a tremendous firing of artillery, and it was not possible for me to turn back because my battalion had retired. We shall very soon return to the charge, and we shall take the fort at all costs.—Salutations to all from your URBANO."

. . . .

A young officer just sent to the front from the military training school at Modena writes:—

"We are very well and full of happiness. We begin to have our first impressions of the war. This morning we were interested in seeing various aeroplanes of the enemy followed by our shrapnel fire, which surrounded them with white clouds. It seemed like a display of fireworks.

"Very shortly I also shall be in the midst of the battle. I have a mad desire to take my place amongst our magnificent soldiers, and with them to conquer and put the Austrians to flight. Believe me that here we have a perception of the war very different from what we had before coming."

. . . .

A letter to his father:—

"MY DEAR PAPA,—After two days, I take a moment when there is quiet on both sides, and we have a little place to write, and I want you to know that I am happy and very well, and I hope that is the same with all of you.

"After receiving your long letter, dear Papa, I stayed reading it for a half hour. What contentment and what joy filled my heart! It was a good thing, for we had been two days and nights in an engagement. You can understand my feelings, when my little gun was firing during the action, and they kept on telling us to advance, so that after

being in the second line many hours, the blood of us brothers was so aroused that we could stay no longer in the trenches. We kept our eyes on the face of our captain to see when he would say 'Forward!' Then those of us who were ahead heard him, 'Forward, children!' In an instant we had leaped from the trench to the aid of the first, and then at the cry '*Savoia!*' we rushed upon the enemy like tigers. It was like a *festa* for us. The fight lasted some time and resulted in our taking many prisoners, and the cannon finished the bombardment from the high positions. Up to now I am very well. I have proved my small courage against the enemy. You may be contented that I am well because the cold here is a little greater than in some other parts.

"In regard to what you said about my health, dear Mamma and Papa, you must know that the military uniform brings luck, because I have never had any more trouble. I am well, only you know that there are some pigs which never grow fat, but, notwithstanding, I am very well. At the moment in which I write, they are bringing us a little cognac, which is sent here from another part, and with which I feel well. It is cold here and we cannot make a fire, because we are but fifty or sixty metres distant from the enemy's lines, and we must go ahead every day. But we are hoping that Christmas may unite us all."

A Few Letters of Thanks

"I hasten to send you this letter at once, to thank you warmly for the beautiful helmet which you sent me.

"I thank you, Signora, and here in my trench I will pray for you to God, the Divine Saviour, that He will give you all the happiness that can be in this world.

"Signora, this helmet is very useful to me as I am living under a small tent, and last night the snow with its beautiful white veil covered us.

"Now I am here under Monte Nero, to fight for the honour of my brothers who have already given their lives in helping to take these two most rugged and difficult mountains.

"Let us have courage, and let us hope that splendid Russia, France, England, and Italy may, after so many sacrifices, obtain the final reward of overthrowing those barbarous Germans and Austrians who have plunged all Europe in a sea of tears, of sighing and lamentations.

"Excuse me, Signora . . . that I send this without stamps, for we are in a place where it is not possible to get them.

"Excuse my poor writing, and, together with this letter, let me send you the most cordial thanks. . . .

"'Springtime, which is so beautiful,
Fills the garden with its sweet flowers,
England: new Italy
We are defending with our honour.'

"*Viva* England!
Viva United Italy!"

. . . .

"17 *April* 1916.

"Most esteemed Signora,—I send you my thanks for the providential and most welcome gift which you sent me. I was touched by the noble sentiment and zeal and the rare generosity which you show in relieving the distresses which we soldiers must face against a second enemy, the cold, more terrible to us than the ancient foe who has held us in subjection; and who attempts with terrible

obstinacy to overcome the force of our army, animated by sentiments of liberty and redemption.

"But now every one is convinced that by the action of the allied forces we shall soon see justice done to those who have so greatly abused in such vile ways, in order to subdue by their tyranny civilised peoples who are ardently looking forward to a wider liberty and independence.

"We are steadfast in our belief that soon the enemy will have to pay the price of all his crimes; only with the satisfaction of seeing this accomplished can we return happy to our dear families.

"While I thank you from my heart, I add my deepest good wishes for Easter, and I am your most grateful,——"

. . . .

"NETTUNO, 14 *April* 1916.

"MOST NOBLE SIGNORA,—Your good wishes, together with the woollen articles which are so useful, have given me great pleasure. I feel in my heart that I always will do my duty and in the dangers of battle I will be strong, remembering that besides my children, other kind and generous hearts are watching over us. . . . Our war is holy!

"Thank you, thank you, oh good Signora. The garments you have sent me will wear out with time, but I shall never forget my good benefactress."

. . . .

"My heart is afflicted, because I cannot express myself to you with the pen as I would if I could speak. But as I have enough strength and courage, I shall return home filled with pride and victory, and at the same time I will discharge my obligation to you for your gift and for the thought which you had in this bad winter season for the poor and humble soldiers who suffer from the cold."

"Honoured Signora,—I thank you so much for the goodness you have shown me in sending me all those things to protect me from the cold. I know that it is very cold in those places where I am going . . . from one day to another we are expecting to leave. I try to hope in God that He will take our part, and bring back peace to the world as it was before.

"You may believe, Signora, that since I came away and left my children without anything except that little allowance from the government, I have wept very much for them because I had to leave them without any provisions in the house and without money.

"I thank you again and I am a thousand times obliged . . . and may God reward you for the goodness shown to me.

"Please excuse me, Signora, that I have sent such a late reply, but you know very well that I have no money . . . and I could not ask for any, for to take even one *soldo* from my dear children would be a great sin.

"I salute you and I am your servant."

. . . .

"Believe me that it has done me a great deal of good to think how we soldiers here are remembered, here, on these mountains, on these steeps, exposed to such immense risks, to continual danger; we cannot but feel admiration for you for the care you have for us."

. . . .

"I do not know what words I can inscribe on this poor sheet of paper to thank you for the goodness you have shown me. . . .

"I hope that it will not be a surprise to you if you find that I am still in such a beautiful city as Savona and not among my companions to help with my life towards the

greatness of the *Patria*. I shall always be grateful to you, and when I am on the field of glory my heart will always be turned towards my dearest ones. . . .

"I shall be glad and happy to take weapons in my hands again and to return to his side, to defend the sacred life of our beloved sovereign as well as the precious life of the merciful Cadorna.

"In times of sadness my heart will always turn to those towards whom I feel so much gratitude.

"I am happy to send my most cordial greetings to all the members of the committee.

"Accept my respects."

. . . .

"SIGNORA ———,

"To thank Your Excellency.

"I come with this poor page to express my gratitude, not finding any other way to express to you my most sincere congratulations for having received, not from you personally but from the Committee '*Pro-Patria*,' the following articles: stockings, a helmet, and gloves (all of wool). They will help me in the great cold.

"If fate permits me to return to my native place, I shall be always grateful and I shall be happy to sacrifice myself for my benefactors, as now for the *Patria*.

"I hope that one day, all united, we may raise the song of the final victory."

. . . .

Enrico Toti was a hero of the Roman populace. Although deprived of one leg by a railroad accident, yet his ardent "sporting" spirit and his love of adventure and hazard sent him into numberless

competitions of all sorts, and his physical defect was never allowed to stand in his way. At the outbreak of the war he was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the great cause of patriotism and right, and one of the most eager of volunteers. He had difficulty for a time in being placed as he longed to be, and he finally applied to the Duke d'Aosta for his aid in a letter given in part further on.

The Duca d'Aosta, the commander of the Third Army, realised his bravery and ability and he was allowed to be enrolled as a Bersagliere, in which corps he had served when a young man of twenty years of age.

Before the war he had opened a little business in Rome, where he lived in the *Trastevere* quarter, and manufactured toys, little trifles in wood, and so forth, with the assistance of three or four workmen. With the pension which was his and the gains from his work he lived comfortably, and gave away nearly all he earned to the poor. He was also of great assistance to the police in keeping order in the neighbourhood, and he was held in the greatest respect.

For many months he was employed in the war zone as a letter-carrier and messenger. Finally, in January 1916, Major Razzini, commander of the third regiment of Bersagliere bicyclists, permitted him to go into the trenches: he was an incomparable sentry: he worked as a digger of mines or in clearing the ground,—he carried what loads he could: he was perfectly happy. He would tell his companions the story of his adventurous life,

stirring up the careless, and although himself mutilated, he encouraged the weak.

But when on the 6th of August his battalion was ordered to attack the peak of Quota 85 (near Monfalcone), he insisted on following his companions, and to repeat the words of his colonel:—

"He was one of the first to reach the enemy's trench, throwing bombs and fighting as he could with his gun," for he had learned how to aim and to fire by holding the barrel of his gun under his right arm-pit and sustaining himself on his crutch with his left.

"He was wounded three times. Dripping blood, he fired and shouted to his companions: '*Viva l'Italia! Viva Trieste! Viva i Bersaglieri!*' At his third wound he fell to the earth, got up, took two or three steps: then, leaning on his gun, he grasped his crutch, the poor symbol of the weakness which for the love of his country he had known how to transform into strength and heroism —and he hurled it in defiance at the flying enemy. Then falling back, he died."

He was awarded the highest of all honours, the gold medal, which was consigned to his father in Rome in the following September. And here are a few extracts from the letter which his colonel wrote about him to that same proud father:—

"Respected Signor Toti,—Your son was of a pure heroic spirit, and he was loved by us all like a dear brother.

"He presented himself to me in January and was made one of our battalion. He took part during the days in the trenches in the most difficult and dangerous undertakings.

In the days of fighting he rendered the most precious services to the combatants: but particularly was helpful in his indefatigable endeavours in preaching the love of country to his fellow Bersaglieri. Not being always able to take active part in the battle, to him was often confided the reading or commenting on an article adapted to be read to our simple and brave soldiers. . . .

"Enrico Toti, the valorous son of Italy, deserved to be honoured by her patriots, for a nobler and more worthy heart and soul never existed in the history of a people.

"His heroism obscures the fame of many an heroic figure, and his example should serve to arouse from a cowardly lethargy all those who in order to keep away from danger and conflict take advantage of physical imperfections.

"The soul of Enrico Toti will ever live in us as an emblem of duty and of sacrifice.

"Not only you, but Rome and all Italy, should be proud of such heroism."

. . . .

The letter of Enrico Toti to the Duca d'Aosta, begging for permission to take part in the war:—

"CERVIGNANO.

"TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUCA D'AOSTA,—On the outbreak of the war against barbarous Austria, with my flag flying I took part in the demonstrations at Rome . . . and everywhere by my words and acts I tried to prove to even the most obstinate the necessity for this war. I promised later on to make my banner float the first on the hill of redeemed S. Giusto. The papers of Rome, Milan, of Genoa and elsewhere spoke of this in words full of fire and patriotism: I was accompanied to the station

and flowers and sweets were offered to me. Since that day I have been in the war zone, constantly exposed to danger without as yet having taken part in active service, though recognised by many officers as being fit to carry out any daring and difficult undertaking and to offer to the *Patria* my best contribution. I am familiar with danger to such a point that no obstacle would be great enough to deter me from an enterprise begun. I am a fervent citizen of Italy, and even if I must shed my last drop of blood I shall never go back. I beg to explain my capabilities, and since with one leg only I have merited so much esteem on the field of bravery, I hope to prove my title to aspire to the honour which I ask.

"For eight years I served the State and in the Royal Navy. I took part in the campaign in Africa, and I earned the right to wear a medal. In the contests held at Spezia in 1903, I was the champion military bicyclist of the naval squadron. After I had finished my military service I passed examinations to get into the service of the railroads and I was the first in knowledge and practical work, and some of my mechanical devices were preserved in the offices of the General Direction by the head engineer of the service. After three years of this work I was the victim of a railway accident and my left leg had to be amputated. On the restoration of my health, I took up my career of sport again and, though with only one leg, gained a medal in an international swimming contest on the Tiber in Rome. . . . After that I dedicated myself to the perfecting of a certain invention and was awarded various premiums and medals in different exhibitions where my work was shown.

"Then I travelled all over Europe on my bicycle studying the different peoples, and my dream has ever been to see Italy great and prosperous. I have been all over France,

Belgium, Holland, Germany, Russia, and so on, and even to the Arctic Polar Circle where, on account of the ice, I was obliged to remain some time with the Esquimaux of Lapland. I crossed Austria and Poland and finally came back to Rome and to my family. After some months of rest I went to Alexandria and travelled all along the course of the Nile and through Egypt and Nubia. . . . In all my journey of exploration I travelled about twenty thousand kilometres, and I had to encounter tempests of snow, and ice, wolves, hyenas . . . and to suffer every kind of privation, and I never yet had to complain. I was proud of my endurance and of my courage, and I was happy to be a worthy son of Italy, and in Denmark I had the high honour of seeing my photograph by the side of those of their Majesties the Sovereigns of Italy.

"I swear that I have the heart for any undertaking whatever, even the most difficult, and whatever I should be ordered to do I would execute without delay. I came into the war zone with everything necessary, hoping to join the Alpini . . . but I could not reach them and under the heavy fire of the enemy I came down again and wandered from trench to trench in the hope of being taken into some corps and of giving my services. I captured Austrian guns, cartridge belts, and so forth, all of which things I brought to headquarters at Cervignano; I have been to Sagrado in the neighbourhood of Gorizia, on the hills of Castelnuovo, and in my going about I have always observed whether the telephone lines had been disturbed, and I searched the fields in the hope of seizing some perfidious spy. I am now well known to almost all the officers and soldiers; one day at Cervignano I was even embraced and kissed. . . . I am certain that I could penetrate into the enemy's camp and study their positions and discover

their batteries without being seen by them. The road which leads from Cervignano to Monfalcone is most closely watched, but by my cunning and the experience which I have gained in passing over various countries, I took out-of-the-way paths and passed through fields of maize, now stooping down and now hiding myself when I saw patrols, and I presented myself to the General of the Brigade at Monfalcone and asked to be taken into the Grenadiers, who are fighting heroically for the greatness of Italy. He admired my courage, but he was perfectly right in saying that he could not assume the responsibility without having higher orders. The commander of the Royal Carabinieri telegraphed to Rome for information regarding me. This was of the best, and so I was again sent to Cervignano to await some superior decision.

"Now I turn to Your Royal Highness, and, knowing that the House of Savoy has always been magnanimous and generous, I implore you to put me into some company and so to let me have the hope of either dying for the *Patria* or of entering among the first into Trieste.

"With the expression of my eternal gratitude.—I am Your Royal Highness's most devoted Enrico Toti."

. . . .

In the great fighting of May 23rd on the Carso there fell another brave soldier of Siena, a lieutenant of infantry, while leading an attack. He wrote several letters home just before his end, and a few words from them are worth repeating.

On the 2nd of May he said:—

"Here I am again in the first line, and in a position now famous. I can see Trieste and our sea, placid, quiet, almost

indifferent to what happens on these rocks, which are furrowed and disembowelled, battered at continuously by the fire of the enemy. I am well and I am content; my heart feels as light as when the greatest hopes excited me. Here the men are truly at their best. There is a fervour of industry as on the eve of great events and I find my enthusiasm stirred and my faith increased in this brave people who will have the right to conquer after to-morrow because to-morrow they will have won the greatest battle of history."

Again on the 19th he wrote:—

"To-day the artillery has some long pauses of silence and the enemy is pushed further away by their enormous big-calibre guns.

"The mind has need of quiet and of quiet thoughts. The papers have written at some length in regard to this battle, which to-day has a brief interruption but to-morrow will be renewed with fierce violence. He who has lived in the attitude of waiting to rush forward under the iron mask of our guns will never forget it.

"I have in my pocket the written order in which my company is told to constitute the first wave of the assault, and as soon as the battle becomes still more furious that order will have perfect execution.

"After two years of war one must still fight with the same principles as at first, and re-awaken one's ideal. . . .

"But when to-morrow I shall give the order to my men they will follow me with faith and even with affection."

He was informed that he had been destined by the Minister of War to go to X——, if he so

cared to do, and give a course of instruction in the use of the machine-gun; but he wrote:—

"Perhaps thou alone who knowest me will believe me that this news leaves me indifferent. . . . I am in this great furnace, my duty is assigned me, I have more than two hundred men to bring with me, I must be the first. To go to X—— now would seem to me cowardice. And it is I, and not my critics, who must take care of my own conscience."

On the 22nd of May he wrote:—

"I have not yet received thy promised letter. From to-day I shall not be here any longer, but beyond—or others will read about me. I am well and I am very calm. My very enthusiasm gives me the necessary serenity."

And on the very last day of his life, in probably the last words which he wrote, he said to his mother:—

"I am going! An embrace. *Viva l'Italia santa!*—Thy SANDRO."

And so he fell.

. . . .

One of the young heroes from Siena was Adolfo Virgilli, the nineteen-year-old son of a well-known professor in the university. He served the *Patria* for more than a year, and was a good soldier and greatly beloved companion. His captain wrote such a touching letter on his death that it is quoted here. It is a letter to the father of the young soldier:—

"ZONA DI GUERRA, *October 7th*, 1916.

"HONOURED PROFESSOR,—It is now only, on my return from an inspection, that I am able to carry out my sad duty, the accomplishment of which fills my heart with such deep sadness. I feel always more and more the blank which your dear son has left behind him.

"It was like this: Our dear friend who is gone brightened with his gaiety the inevitable moments of sadness through which we must pass, and with his youthful courage, with his goodness, with his youth, fresh and uncorrupted, he made even us feel young, and he made us believe that noble sentiments are not yet dead in our hearts, and that we are not weakened after these many months of hard fighting, of fatigues and sufferings. He was truly part of our light, of our strength.

"He was such a boy: they called him '*gingillino*' (little plaything), and he still kept that title in difficult moments in the hard life of the trenches, yet he was a strong and energetic man in the moment of danger.

"I had him near me on May 17th, the day of fighting in which our company covered itself with glory. They were all clinging to the perpendicular rocks of a formidable position of the enemy, which we were attempting to scale under the offensive of bombs and other projectiles thrown from a few metres above us, while we could see our poor dead and wounded soldiers rolling down into the depths below.

"He was calm and smiling, with that smile which lighted up his face like an aureole of goodness; I was agitated by the gravity of the situation and by the pain of a slight wound, but more from vexation that I could not go on higher. He calmed me and advised me wisely—

always calm and brave himself. And in an epic assault I saw him disappear in the cloud raised by the explosion of a shell: miraculously unharmed, he was deprived of his senses. I saw him that same evening and rejoiced, for I had believed him wounded: he was still smiling.

"Every one loved him, even his superiors. The morning after his death, the general commanding the brigade, in a visit to the advanced positions, seeing us all depressed, grasped my hand, and in a trembling voice said some words to encourage me, while I wept. None of us can yet believe the truth, and we are always thinking of seeing him appear before us again.

". . . I do not know how to speak words of consolation, for the grief of a father is too great; I know, however, that your soul is so nobly generous and your sentiments of patriotism so elevated that I hope you will find comfort in the thought of the *Patria*, to which you have consecrated your own flesh, your own blood. . . . You already knew that you were offering your son to the sacrifice: you consented, and now the sacrifice is invested with the character of heroism.

". . . You have co-operated with your own blood in the greatness of Italy. This is the thought which should comfort your generous heart. Two words in regard to the sad event. We were at the fortification of Cima Lana: I had left Adolfo in the morning in one of the galleries to rest a little, as at one o'clock he would have to mount guard. I went down to the commander. Some hours passed, and I did not see him coming; I went up to the post of observation, he was not there nor in the galleries. I had a soldier look for him, but the search was in vain. I began to be anxious, and I could not persuade myself that he, always so faithful to his duty, should have left his very

important post without notifying me. Suddenly, while I was speaking of my apprehensions to some of the other officers, a dreadful thought flashed through my mind. At about one o'clock two big shells of the enemy had exploded over the Cima; had he been buried by them? One of these shells had exploded over the post of observation and one of the shelters had been wrecked. As soon as this terrible thought came to me I hurried with a squadron of *zappatori* and we began to dig, I with the most cruel anguish in my mind. The Austrians from afar noticed our movements and threw shrapnel. What did that matter? the work went on. After two hours we discovered the opening of the shelter, and under the ruins, seated as perhaps he was at the moment of the explosion, was the body of our friend.

"Courage, Signor Professor; Adolfo died with his beautiful face towards the enemy, steadfast at his post, notwithstanding the bombardment of the hated enemy, as though he had died in the midst of the fury of the battle, with the same courage, with equal heroism.

"The dear body, amidst a chorus of lamentations, and of tears shed by the strong mountaineers, was carried to the cemetery. While he was passing, even the cry of hate against the cruel enemy was hushed: but when he had been carried by, clenched hands were lifted threateningly in the air. We will avenge him. The name of our friend will be ever on our lips and in our hearts, and especially when we come face to face with the enemy.

"No other of our dead has had such honour as he. His body was enclosed in a double coffin of wood and of zinc and laid in our cemetery. Already there is in course of construction a little monument of stone; when it is finished I shall see that you have the photograph of it.

The company and the officers of the battalion have laid two wreaths on his tomb. . . . I am sending you the ribbons from them . . . they are stained with rust, but everything else here is the same. We wanted our wreath to be white, as a symbol of the purity of the soul of this dear youth. All the things found on his body and among his effects, papers, books, souvenirs of the war, I have already forwarded to Siena. For greater security they are accompanied by a soldier. Perhaps you have already received them. His stick only is left. I ask as the highest favour that you will let me keep that in memory of him: I possess no other remembrances but those of his goodness and of the virtue which filled his heart. . . . I enclose two notes from officers to show you how we all loved your son.

"I ask your pardon that I have had to sadden you still further by the expression of my own grief, but I felt it my duty to let you know, as a father, how your son was loved.—Yours most devotedly, Pietro Rossi, Captain of the 46th Infantry."

. . . .

On the first day of 1916 the young student of medicine, Pierino Castagna, who had left his studies and entered the military school of Modena to be trained as an officer, sent to his mother his photograph in his new uniform with the following dedication:—

"To my dear mother, who gave me a heart so that by the holy affection for the persons and things which the native roof shelters, I feel a new affection for the great family of Italy, and I cannot be bound by a vain selfishness which would defile the domestic hearth—I offer to

her to-day this keepsake while I prepare myself to offer to the Mother Country my energies, my faith, and my enthusiasm."

He was a brave and ardent soldier and he fell on the 13th of July of the same year. He was but twenty years old. His last wish was that his family should be saddened as little as possible by the tidings of his death, and that they should be told "that he died with his face to the foe."

. . . .

From the soldier Angelo —— from Alzano Maggiore (Bergamo):—

"6/12/1916.

"My dearest Ones,—Still under the impression of what happened last night, actually in my trench and to me, I give you an account of it so that with me you may thank the Lord and our beloved dead who so effectually have helped me to fulfil my duty as a soldier. Do not alarm yourselves nor make sad comments in regard to me: I am still among the living and I hope soon to be in your arms to receive the sweetest reward that a son may claim, and that is the kiss of my adored mother and of my dearest father.

"Here then are the facts.

"You know well, from what I have written to you before, that this front is quiet beyond words; but not, however, always: the devil does not wish things to run along like that and every once in a while he shows us his tail. The fact is that last evening, after five days of repose, it was necessary to exchange with another company, and we all went on towards four o'clock.

"Soon we arrived at the place assigned to us and

received our orders. I had to go on duty as sentinel on the third watch, which is to say from nine to eleven. It rained in torrents and a strong wind howled in a gloomy manner through the thick pine woods, dense with verdure, which covers the sides of the mountain. In front of the posts of the sentinels there is a very thick wire entanglement which prevents any surprise.

"I do my service regularly and at eleven I go down and throw myself on a bench in the redoubt to rest. Not a quarter of an hour passes before a loud detonation awakes me. At first I attributed it to the explosion of a mine or the launching of one of our bombs; but soon after some rifle shots from our sentries convinced me that an attack of the enemy was imminent. I rushed out from the redoubt with my gun in my hand, and alone I turned myself in the direction of the explosion and of the firing. The reality of the affair was made apparent without delay and I heard the enemy distinctly and the men quarrelling among themselves.

"I shouted out: 'Who goes there?' . . . Many gun shots and the explosion of two or three bombs answered me.

"I did not lose courage, I made the sign of the Holy Cross, invoking my beloved dead, and I began to fire in the direction from which I heard the voices and the shots. Distinctly I heard a chorus of lamentations and of invocations for help; one saw that I had exactly hit the mark. For an instant I ceased firing to see if they were going away, instead I heard the sound of a little trumpet: to that sound followed a formidable 'Hurrah, Hurrah!' it is their war cry, and when they shout like that they are about to attack. Only a very few minutes had passed before I saw five of them exactly above the trench.

"They had blown up the wire entanglement with a tube of dynamite between the post of one sentry and that of another, and, favoured by the storm, they were entering our enclosure and climbing up on the edge of my trench. I saw them about ten steps away from me. Then I shouted loudly twice, 'Surrender yourselves, surrender. Throw down your arms.' At the sound of my voice they replied with an insult to Italy. I saw no more; I pointed my gun resolutely and aimed at the first, he gave a stifled cry and fell instantly; I aim at the second and fire, and he falls backwards yelling desperately for help and rolls down the slope. I point my gun at the third, the fourth, and the fifth, and all go the same way. Slowly but calmly and coolly I fired and prayed together, and I hit them every time more or less seriously, and they fell and rolled down crying out like souls in despair. Not seeing any one else on top of the trench, I looked out from the peephole to see if there was no one left to satisfy, and there I saw a cadet, who was probably an Austrian sub-lieutenant, who, with his hands and his voice, was inciting his soldiers to return to the attack. I shouted to him to surrender, and he replied with a curse and shot. He aims high; I do nothing but press the trigger of my gun, which I had already aimed, and with the last shot I killed him on the instant and he fell without a cry. I looked around and called for my companions. I was alone: they had fled. I stayed where I was for a little, firing some shots, and then not seeing any one nor hearing any one, I begin to shout for my companions. Soon after they came back, and encouraged by my words they began to fire. But nothing more was to be seen or heard; the enemy was gone. I took a long breath and thanked the Lord who had helped and protected me. One of my companions, however, struck by a fragment of a bomb, died, and we had two

wounded. The rest of the night I passed in watching along the redoubt and in encouraging my friends. I was soaked through and icy cold, but I noticed nothing of this. Later on, when I was sure that no one else was coming, I went to my sergeant and begged him to give me a little bread and chocolate, for I was hungry. Then I ate.

"In the morning all my companions and the two lieutenants commanding the platoon gave me an ovation. I ran away.—I saw my dead, and, poor things, they were two fine young men, strong and beautiful. Fate had brought them to die by my bullet. I was indeed sorry, and I almost wept seeing them so beautiful . . . and dead on account of me. My chaplain soon understood that and consoled me, saying, 'Fear nothing, thou hast done thy duty . . . and if they had come down, it is certain that, finding thee alone, they would have cut thee in pieces. Now pray for them, and I will say a mass in their behalf.' Up to now there is nothing new and I am well. I am always looking for news of you. Write to me soon. I trust that you are all well, and that keeps me calm.

"You will be doing me a real favour if you will have a Holy Mass celebrated for them. Heaven knows that I did not want to kill them, but on the other hand I could not do less with the danger to the lives of me and my companions.

"Good-bye, my dear ones, salute the uncles and dear little grandma, pray always for me, for you see how much need I have of that. And with the sweet and longing vision of soon being able to embrace and kiss you, all, all of you, I hold you passionately to my bosom and I kiss you on the lips and heart.—Your Angelo."

. . . .

From the same:—

"From the redoubt—On a scouting expedition.

"7/12/16.

"My dear Ones,—If you could guess where I am now you would have to guess a thousand times. I am on the day patrol, in a little hut on the advance positions far from the trenches and wire entanglements. From here we observe the movements of the enemy, that is to say, whether groups of them are coming forward or whether they are keeping quiet. Yesterday the lieutenant who was the witness of my act, reported to the commander of the battalion what I had done. My name now runs from lip to lip in all the regiment, and when they see me going about they all point me out and salute.

"In the morning I went to take up the dead enemy in company with my lieutenant. I had indeed aimed well: poor things, they lay prostrate with their faces to the ground. My dear chaplain himself wanted to take the responsibility of their identification and of their burial. Not being satisfied, he went to the scene of action, and on beyond the wire, down into the wood, and he found many bayonets, cartridge belts, haversacks, bombs, and a sack of cartridges. It is thought that there must have been not less than a hundred of them. A little later, the colonel in command of the battalion and the colonel of the regiment came to the place and said to me 'that my name was already generally honoured.' After this the commander of the company assembled all the squadrons and exhorted them to try and follow my example, saying: 'A hundred such men, and I could hold all the line.'

"'You're too kind, Saint Antonio,' I said to myself when I heard this. . . . Towards two o'clock, after dinner, he sent to call me personally, and when I stood

before him with a salute, a very ceremonious one as for a festal day, he returned the salute, and lifting his cap, with a voice broken by emotion he said, 'Bravo! thou art indeed a brave soldier'; and so saying he shook me vigorously by the hand. You can't imagine how astonished I was, and I answered, 'But what do you mean and what do you say, Signor Commander? All the soldiers would have done as I did. After all it was nothing extraordinary.' He did not give me time to finish, but with emphasis he responded, 'That is not true, the others took to flight, and it was thy cool blood and thy calmness which were sufficient to repel the enemy.'

"He made me give him an account of everything, and after I had finished he said, 'Bravo! always act like that; thou deservest a reward, and I have already proposed thee for——,' and he would not tell me anything more. 'Go,' said he, 'and be ready to go to thy place.' I saluted, I thanked him, and I went to the chaplain. I told him all, and you cannot imagine his joy and contentment.

"To-night my sergeant has not permitted me to mount guard. 'Thou,' he told me, 'must stay by me, and with me thou shalt go to inspect the sentries, for I am short of an officer,' and then I went to sleep almost immediately. I stayed all the night with him, on his camp bed, warm and very comfortable.

"This morning he was ordered to bring up the patrol, and you may well believe that I wasn't left out: 'I have need of men who are worth something.' And now we are all here gathered together in one room, the only one left intact by the shells. We shall stay here until four o'clock this evening, and then we shall re-enter the redoubt. Let us hope that nothing bad will happen.

"Close to the breach opened by the enemy we have

found three other big tubes of gelatine, as thick as the water pipe which serves to drain the roofs and four or five metres in length. If they had happened to blow up, poor us! It would have been a pretty mess!

" Now you see why I beg so much that you will pray for me. I have great faith in my dead and in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and in Maria; I invoke them always, and I pray that they may assist me and save me from every danger. And I am ever thankful to them.

" I am well up to now and I try to be hopeful about all of you. Here it rains all the time and a strong icy wind, coming down from the snowy peaks above us, blows continually. I have forgotten to say that I have engaged my chaplain to say a mass for me for the two Austrian soldiers killed by me in combat. Have I done right? Will you tell me yes or no.

. . . .

" And you, dear adored Mamma, receive a special kiss and a salute from thy son who has no other thought or desire and who longs for nothing else but that soon he may press you in his arms and to his heart.—Angelo."

CHAPTER VIII

1916–1917—HEROES OF ALL RANKS

The Infantry

The following appreciation of the Italian soldier in the ranks is by one of the leading war correspondents of Italy. It puts before us a vivid picture of the modest, simple lads who fight so heroically and obey so willingly. They are to be seen every day all over the length and breadth of Italy, but they never cease to arouse our wonder and our respect:—

"Every time I think of the Italian soldier I see him again. I always remember his humble yet sublime speech. He was a soldier of the infantry, a poor, good devil of a *contadino* from the south, who probably could not read or write. He was not very young and he had nothing of a martial air about him. He was not a beautiful soldier, as so many of them are whom we see passing by, and of whom we say with pride: 'Fine fellows!'—and whom we imagine in striking attitudes ready for a fiery attack with the bayonet. He—no. He was one of many, one of the infinitesimal human particles which make up the great fighting mass. He was almost comical, his face was thin and yellowish, two big ears like fans, and a black beard which had not been cut for fifteen days,—in uneven tufts: his jacket was shabby, his trousers enormous, and his putties bound with string. He was seated on a stone, with

a load on his back which almost hid him from sight: knapsack, cloak, tent cloth, water bottle, '*gavetta*,' cartridge belt, and helmet. He was muddy up to his ears. He had but just lately arrived with his battalion,—a reserve battalion which was waiting to go on to the first line, a kilometre further on, where they were fighting. One could hear the crack of the rifles and the firing of the machine-guns; and all about there resounded a deafening thunder of artillery. This thin infantryman sat quite still under a light drizzling rain, his gun erect like a stick between his knees, from time to time drying his yellowish face, which was devoid of all expression, with his sleeve, and staring before him with an absent gaze.

"An officer of the artillery who for the moment had nothing to do approached him. He had said to me a little before:

"'I adore these true heroes of the war, these good modest fellows, the infantry. If I did not love my cannon so much I should like to be an infantry officer and live with them. They are never insignificant. Sometimes they tell me of things of which I had never thought, which reveal Italy to me, the great and true Italy, which we do not know; things which take me deep down into the waters of the national mind, of which we see nothing, looking as we do only at the foam of the surface. The truth is down there, at the bottom of this unmoved mass, where the light which illuminates our minds comes like a glimmer through the twilight. Brave and good infantry! We shall owe the victory to them, to these Italian peasants who carry a gun, and who sometimes die without knowing clearly why. We, dying, are compensated for the loss of our life by our conscience and by the beauty of our sacrifice. We know what the *Patria* gains. They in their

spiritual twilight only follow their guide, and they sacrifice themselves for a vague duty the beauty of which they do not see. There are some enlightened souls among them, but they are few—they are the exceptions. The great mass obey the stern command without discussing it, or asking about it, with the same mind with which they say to God: "Lord, do with us as thou wilt!" Almost all of them, indeed, are believers: even those who in their own villages boast themselves that they are not, are believers here. Brave, good infantry! I could kiss the ground when they pass.'

"'. . . . What art thou doing here?' I now asked of the soldier of whom I have spoken above. He had risen to his feet and was engaged in arranging his pack on his shoulders.

"'I am with the battalion,' he answered in his southern imperfect dialect, twisting his head about a little to indicate his companions.

"'Of what brigade art thou?'

"The soldier hesitated a little, then replied almost timidly:

"'I do not know.'

"'How is it that thou dost not know? And who is thy colonel, dost thou know?'

"'Signore, no.'

"'And thy major?'

"He shook his head disconsolately.

"'I don't know.'

"'But how, dost thou know nothing,—thou?'

"Then came the grand reply. The infantryman's plain face was lighted up by a humble smile, and he answered simply:

"'Signor Lieutenant, there are many things we

don't know. We know one — that we are here to go forward.'

. . . .

"We do not ask him anything more. We returned towards the battery in silence, thoughtful and moved. And the soldier too went off into the distance, a little bent under the weight of his load, and joined his companions, who were already ascending the slopes of Quota . . ., humble and brave like him, unconscious of the grandeur of the acts which they were going to perform, without hesitation as also without any effrontery, acting just as though they were about to do what they had always done, going to work: only instead of the hoe they had now a gun. As they had never asked why their life must be so hard, and had accepted it as it was without discussion, so now without discussion they accept this sacrifice. Something superior, outside of their thought, had ordered them to work, so now they were ordered to fight, perhaps to die. They obeyed, urged now as then by a profound sense of human duty. And beyond that they did not care to know. It was for them to 'go forward.'

"And they knew well what that meant, that 'going forward': their brigade had many times seen its empty spaces in the ranks filled up again. But what does that matter? Another soldier told me one day that almost all his companions in the platoon had fallen. He sighed as he thought of them, and gazed into the distance with a look full of longing. Then he added: 'Well, one sees that even this is necessary.' . . . Into his vague thoughts, into his dim mind, one ray of the great truth had penetrated and there remained like a tranquil faith. 'One sees' that it must be so, that this is duty.

"Duty: towards whom? That was told them, these

soldiers of the fields, when they joined the regiment, when they departed for the war: duty towards the King, towards the *Patria*, towards the cause of justice. . . . He listened and tried to understand, but he has not succeeded. These words have remained floating uncertainly through his brain. That same idea of the *Patria* is still an idea too little understood by the greater part of our rural population, it is something vague, abstract, about which none of them have thought clearly. The practical as well as the sacred conception of it escapes them. It is not easy to comprehend how one can 'want' to do a thing when one does not thoroughly understand what that thing is. The cause of justice: words which strike the attention of the simple; but even these are vague and shadowy. The King: that is the only expression which, while it remains still a little abstract, arouses and fixes the conception of a will which needs to be obeyed. Ask a soldier of Sardinia why he is fighting. He will answer you: 'For the King.' All the rest, all the other reasons of the war escape him. He is fighting because the King has ordered it: and like him are the greater part of our southern people. The King is the supreme master, the master of masters. But why this is so he does not know. The definitions which a shepherd from the Abruzzi, a *contadino* from the Basilicata, and a woodman from Calabria give as to what the King is are incredibly bizarre. . . . For almost all of them the King is just 'a man like you and me'—and some of them will add, 'but very learned,' and others, 'and good to the poor.' But in regard to his life and the exercise of his power you hear them say the strangest things in the world. One of them will sum it all up by saying: 'and he is a great Signore who commands all.'

"And if you ask why he commands all of us, any one of

them, after having considered, will answer: 'I don't know.' It is the sense of duty rooted in the simple, old-fashioned mind which comes back. The infantryman who goes forward into the trench where he knows that perhaps he will fall, is urged on and guided only by this profound mysterious law. He understands that it is necessary to obey. More than this he does not ask. . . . There are many things which he and his companions do not know. 'We are of the ignorant, forgive us.' 'We are the great "*plebe*," the common people of Italy.' . . . 'We know only that we must go forward, Signor Lieutenant!'

"I see once more the muddy soldier, I hear his voice, almost humble as though asking pardon. The meagre little figure grows large: his quiet words drown the noise of the battle. It was not just one soldier, it was all our people, all the obscure throng sprung from our soil, who spoke with his voice: there were all the infantry of Italy, the great little people, the heroic common people of the war, those who go to fight without understanding why, without asking anything, knowing only that it is necessary. I see him now up there, in his trench, stormed at by the Austrian cannon, the little southern soldier. He is hidden under the parapet, as in ambush. Near him are other soldiers who seem to resemble him. All at once a voice shouts: 'Forward! To the bayonet!' The hidden ranks leap to their feet, they throw themselves forward out of the shelter. Many fall. Some of them stop, uncertain: '*Avanti!*' '*Forward!*' the voice still [illegible] soldier is the battalion resumes its rush, [illegible] voice of his major, by the among the first drawn [illegible] he does not know.—GUELFO superior [illegible] name [illegible] CIVININI, *October* 1916."

Two of Italy's Martyrs

Among those who have been victims of the war no names stand out brighter on the page of England's story than those of Miss Cavell and Captain Fryatt. Italy too has its martyrs who met death by what the barbarian authorities thought a dishonour, but which has only served to throw a brighter light on their example, and call forth sympathy and reverence for their sufferings and heroism.

Among Italy's martyred patriots there are many names to be known and recognised one day, if they are not now. Of these, two however shine with special clearness, and will never be forgotten. They are those of Cesare Battisti and Nazario Sauro.

The first of these, a scholar and writer, a University lecturer of repute, born in Trieste and so under Austrian rule, was at one time a deputy to the Parliament in Vienna. But his heart was ever Italian, and when the war came, he joined the army of his choice and served his country well. Wounded and taken prisoner after a heroic stand against heavy odds, he was sentenced to death, and a few days afterwards hanged, at the order of the Emperor. He died nobly as he had lived, and will never be forgotten. This was in July 1916. [illegible] hero met his death in the same manner. This was after his martyrdom, another Captain Sauro, who though born at Capodistria and so under Austrian power, yet considered himself Italian, as do most of the people of Istria,

who have no love for nor affinity with Austria. They once belonged to Venetia, and will one day again.

Captain Sauro was born in 1876, and from a very early age dedicated himself to the service of the mercantile marine. He was always one of the firm supporters of the idea that his native place should come again under Italian sovereignty. On the outbreak of the European war he took refuge with his wife and four young children in Venice. During the period of Italy's neutrality, he never lost an occasion to affirm the duty of Italy to take part in the conflict and to liberate the "*terre irredente*," the "unredeemed lands." War being declared, he offered his services to the Navy, and obtained the grade of lieutenant on board a ship. As such he executed many important missions. For his bravery and audacity he received the silver medal for valour, and other distinctions from the Government. Only a few days before he departed on the mission which proved to be his last, he was nominated officer and *Cavaliere* of the Crown of Italy.

After the news of his death by hanging at Pola, on the charge of high treason, was brought to his heart-broken wife, two letters were consigned to her, which Captain Sauro had written in May 1915, the day before the declaration of war. One of these letters was directed to his son, Nino, then fourteen years of age, and was as follows:—

"Thou perhaps comprehendest, or else in a few years' time thou wilt comprehend, what was my duty as an

Italian. I gave to thee, to Libero, to Anita, to Italo, to Albania, names of liberty; but not on the papers alone. These names needed to be sealed, and that is done by the oath which I have kept. I die with regret only because I must deprive my dearest, best children of their loved father. But there remains to you the *Patria*, which must take my place. Swear, Nino, by this *Patria*, and make thy brothers swear, when they are old enough to understand, that you will be always, everywhere and before all, Italians.

"My kisses and my benediction."

The brave captain also begged his son to kiss his grandparents and to love his mother.

In a letter addressed to his wife he says:—

"Be happy then, that my happiness is only that which the Italians have known how and wished to do, my duty. Dear wife, teach our children that their father was first Italian, then father, then citizen.

". . . I cannot but ask thy pardon for having left thee with our five children still with milk upon their lips. I know how thou wilt strive and suffer to bring them along and keep them on the road in which they will follow their father: but nothing else is left for me but to say that I die contented in having done my duty as an Italian."

It is a comfort to know that these children of the brave father are cared for as wards of Italy, and that the family are receiving a pension from the Government. The eldest son, Nino, will, it is to be hoped, prove a worthy successor to his father. He entered the Naval Academy at Leghorn last autumn, and is a promising cadet. How could he be otherwise with such an example to follow? It

is interesting to know that a special gift for the Signora Sauro and her children was sent to them by an American, who wished to honour the memory of the brave husband and father.

The family of Battisti were not so young as those of Sauro, but they too are looked upon in the light of wards of the Government. Nothing less could have been offered to the families of men who gave their lives to their country in such a way.

. . . .

"When Nazario Sauro heard that Cesare Battisti had refused to escape his capture and subsequent execution, by committing suicide, he threw into the sea a ring which he had in his possession, and which contained poison. This ring he had carried with him that he might be able to liberate himself in the event of his capture.

"When he was taken prisoner he went to his martyrdom as to a *festa*. In the epic rivalry of these two men, giants of heroism, thousands and thousands of our brothers who died for the same cause stand at the foot of their Golgotha. Commemorating Battisti and Sauro, we remember also all this sacred multitude."

The young son of Cesare Battisti, barely sixteen years of age, has applied as a volunteer in the Alpini, and in spite of his youth, his very earnest prayer has been granted, and he goes to take his father's place and to avenge his memory.

If the King is admired and loved on the battlefield and in the camp, the Queen is held in equal affection as she works for the wounded and visits the sick and suffering, not only in the hospitals in

Rome and other cities, but going up to the front to carry comfort and cheer with her.

Her special charge, however, is her own hospital in the Quirinal, and it was here that the following interesting episode occurred, as reported in the *Messagero* of 28 June 1916:—

"Queen Elena received a long telegram from the King in which he announced the victorious advance of our soldiers and of the retreat of the Austrians. The Queen immediately read this telegram and others which arrived later to her children. Then she wanted to bring the happy news personally to the wounded soldiers in her hospital in the Quirinal.

"The brave young men received their good genius with great joy, listening, much moved, to the telegrams from the King which she read. At the end of the reading, the wounded, with tears in their eyes, broke out in the cry, '*Evviva l'Italia!*' a unanimous and spontaneous cry which came from all their hearts.

"Yesterday, also, the Queen returned to the hospital and stayed a long time, conversing with the soldiers, making them repeat their impressions of joy felt at the announcement of the great victory. The Queen's visit, as always, called forth another spontaneous demonstration of patriotism."

. . . .

From the *Tribuna*, after the successes in June 1916, when the Austrians were driven back from the positions they had held temporarily:—

"Out then with all the flags! Every dwelling must have its banner; from every house, humble or great, should

come the demonstration in which we show and exult over our victory.

"For long the enemy mocked us and profaned the sacred soil of our country. Our soldiers have shown them that only by treachery and for only a short time could they triumph; they have put them to flight and pursued them with the bayonet. The words '*Fuori d'Italia*' are again become a palpitating reality of our national life, as at another time in our history. . . . Let the citizens of Rome show their banners; let the city blossom with flags: to-day the Italian tricolour adds to itself yet one more glory.

"The news of this morning is more than a war communication: its significance is that the enemy cannot resist the force and the will of our soldiers: that Italy is again worthy of her great past traditions, of her hopes for the future: and Rome which is so much a part of the past, as well as of the future, must demonstrate her joy that she is comprehended in this great moment, this great significance.

"*Cittadini di Roma, fuori le bandiere!*"

Among the names of the heroes who have given their lives and their all for the *Patria*, there are some who were worthy of especial remembrance, and among these must surely be placed that of General Chinotto, who died in August 1916:—

"Trained in the army, and a specialist in electrical engineering, he had served his country in many ways, and when the war broke out he was given an important command. Seriously wounded four times, in each case he insisted on resuming his service before his health was properly re-established, and finally was seized by the grave malady (cancer of the stomach) to which he was forced to

succumb at last, though he continued in service to the end. He submitted to an operation some few months before his death, but took up his work again soon after it. not being willing to give up any time for convalescence. By his energy he reorganised the troops, after the temporary losses early in the summer of 1916, and reconquered all the positions which had been lost in the sector of Monfalcone. During the months of June and July, he led his troops to continuous attacks which served to mask the preparations for the taking of Gorizia. Always ill and suffering, he was kept alive through the days of battle by hypodermic injections of nourishment.

"His strength was so exhausted that he was unable to stand on his feet, but he insisted on being placed in a chair and carried into the fight where he could direct his 'children,' those brave soldiers who placed all their faith in him.

"The prayers of his fellow-officers, who begged him to desist, were in vain; in vain were the protestations of his physician, who implored him to think of himself: 'You are killing yourself, general . . .' 'No matter, no matter, it is only a few days more. I cannot abandon my post.' And so he went on, not sleeping or eating.

"There was nothing to do but to keep on with the nutritive injections, as he refused to leave his place in the battle. The soldiers who carried him were ordered to bring him into the firing line, where the rattle of the guns and the roar of the cannon announced the advance which he himself had planned.

"It was a wonderful sight, the general in the midst of his men, lifted high on his chair, directing the operations which were to bring victory; unmoved by the danger and smiling at death which had already marked him as a victim.

"As soon as the victory was assured, he was carried, in a very grave condition, to the hospital at Udine, where he was continually visited by the other officers of prominence, among them being General Cadorna and General Porro.

"He lay very quietly during those last days, and if in his eyes there was a shade of melancholy, this had its expression in one sublime phrase:—

"'Oh, my dream! . . . It is necessary that we go on. . . . I would have set my foot in Gorizia with my soldiers. . . . This and nothing more, and then, yes, then, to die.'

"On one of the sad mornings of those last days, the general, whose voice, like his strong heart, was failing, called an officer to him and begged him to bring near him to his bed the flag.

"It was brought to him. Two of those who stood near took the flag by its two sides and stretched it out, a radiant curtain, before the eyes of the general, who, supported by his wife, raised himself in the bed. But his strength failed, and he fell back on the pillows with closed eyes and contracted mouth as though it were indeed the end. But the last moment had not yet arrived. He reopened his eyes and smiled on his weeping friends. A slight impetus of strength returned to that arm which had seemed still for ever. The general grasped a fold of the flag, carried it to his lips in a long kiss, and covering his face with it, broke into a convulsive sob.

"And in the sacred silence of all around, he said:—

"'Oh, *Patria*. . . . Oh, *Patria mia*. . . . I cannot give thee anything.' Greatly distressed, a friend lifted the flag which covered the face of the general. He was dying. At that moment General Cadorna and General Porro arrived at his bedside, and his last smile was for them."—From articles in the *Nuova Giornale* and the *Corriere della Sera*.

The First Man to enter Gorizia

His name is Aurelio Baruzzi, and he is a young sub-lieutenant. He has been decorated with a medal for his extraordinary bravery and his remarkable achievements, but he may be called a representative hero, for the army is full of heroic young men.

The general commanding the 5th Regiment of Infantry in Ascoli Picceno speaks thus of him:—

"To see this Baruzzi, to hear him talk, he seems like a big boy. He is, in fact, but nineteen years old. After all that he has done, he does not assume any 'pose.' He speaks of his adventures in the war and of the honours shown him as though they were not his affair; and with humility. He has the curious inflections of the voice, the continual interpolations of the Romagnoli, '*la guarda ben, la creda ben, mi a'n sobrisa*' ('believe it, they have surprised me'), and in listening to him one is struck by the contrast between his modest appearance and the audacity of which he has many times given proof.

"The other day I invited him to dine at my table. I wanted to have all my officers know him so that he might serve as an example to them.

"Talking with him I seemed to have before me a boy, with his ingenuousness, his timidity, his astonishment, and like a good boy he wanted to show me his gold medal. He took it from the outside pocket of his jacket. 'See how beautiful it is, *signor generale*,' he said. And I must look at it on both sides, thoroughly. Then he drew out of his pocket a little Italian flag.

"'Is this from Gorizia?' I asked.

"'No, *signor generale*. Afterwards I got another. I keep one in my pocket always.'

"I begged him to tell me the story of his adventures for which he had received the decoration.

"'It was like this, *signor generale*. I was with three soldiers of a patrol, between Lucinio and Podgora. I arrived the first at a subterranean passage (under the railroad) where the Austrians had barricaded themselves with piles of wood and sacks of earth. Our artillery were firing at the mouth of this gallery. I thought about what I should do, and I decided to try to get into this passage. I advanced with a pistol in my hand (the three soldiers with me) shouting, "Surrender yourselves!" There were more than two hundred Austrians inside the gallery. I said to my three soldiers, "You three are to keep the officers quiet." If the officers did not move the Austrian soldiers would not do anything. And so it was done. We entered: my men possessed themselves each of an officer, and the troops remained dazed and motionless. For some minutes I held my position, but all the time I was thinking, "If reinforcements do not come, how shall I manage to carry away almost two hundred men?" Calling one of the three soldiers, I said in his ear, "Return to our lines and say that they must send help." At the entrance to the passage the rain of our shells was falling, but the soldier crept fast on his hands and knees, and when he returned he told me that they could not send reinforcements until the firing of the artillery ceased. So we remained for some time longer amongst those Austrians, waiting for the firing to cease. I kept them quiet by means of intimidations and shouting. Finally help came, and the troops entered the passage and took all the enemy prisoner.'

"'And you, what did you do then?'

"'I? Oh, I turned myself towards the Isonzo, for I wanted to go into Gorizia. Near the river I met some of our soldiers, and asked them if they wanted to come with me. "Where?" "To Gorizia." "But they are firing on the bridge." "I know it, but come; nothing will happen to us." The soldiers looked at one another, but they came with me. "To Gorizia! To Gorizia!"

"'We entered the city, where we found great confusion. In one of the streets I saw a patrol coming. I thought, "Those are Austrians," and so I stopped and took out my camera, prepared to take a snapshot. The patrol, seeing me stop and bend over the camera, believed who knows what, and raised their arms in sign of surrender. And so the photograph of those Austrians was taken in the act of surrender. What a pity it was that afterwards on our return one of the soldiers to whom I had confided the camera lost it in fording the Isonzo! . . .

"'We went to the station and climbed up on the roof. I took out the flag which I had in my pocket and waved it many times for our men on the other side of the Isonzo to see. The soldiers told me, "But, *signor tenente*, if you wave that flag so much, the Austrians will fire on us." However, after making these signals, I planted the flag on the station and came down. I understood that our men below had seen it. In fact, shortly after that, the first Italian patrol arrived.'

"Three days before this achievement, Baruzzi at the head of a small band of bombardiers passed, under the fire of the enemy, three lines of Austrian trenches, and captured prisoners and materials.

"His merit is increased by the fact that he was a volunteer from the beginning of the war, and that he has always endeavoured to be in the first line, on the most difficult positions of the Isonzo."

From a Calabrian soldier to his schoolmaster; this was written after the taking of Gorizia, from another part of the front:—

"At the Front, 13 *August* 1916.

"My dearest Maestro,—To-day only has the great news arrived. We had heard something by means of the telephone, but it was vague and uncertain and kept us in indescribable trepidation. To-day, however, we know all —the most minute particulars of the great victory. How can I tell you what an effect it has produced on us all here? There has been a frantic, an irresistible outburst of joy: the only shadow which darkens our sincere, holy, and just rejoicing is the disappointment that we were not able to have our part in this victory.

"Everywhere that this good news has come it has aroused an immense enthusiasm which overpowers sadness. And all, all who have given their blood, their arms, their faith must feel the same intimate joy, must have the same assurance that the great mystery will be made clear, that the redemption to which we look forward with a passionate desire of salvation is about to be accomplished, that the nightmare of oppression is disappearing, that it cannot be long before there will be peace on earth and glory to the heroes who have brought it to us.

"With what pride, *maestro mio*, I think, I know that our victory, the tidings of which have flown to every corner, has revived the spirits of the English on the Yser and on the Somme, has encouraged the French on the Meuse, and has awakened the hurrahs of the Russians on the Dwina, on the Stochod, on the Sereth. So is made stronger the bond which unites us all in the carrying out of the great undertaking in which our faith is placed.

"To-day we young men honour but we do not mourn for our brothers who have fallen, who are happy and satisfied in having been the essential part, the raw material of the triumph.

"I swear to you, *maestro*, that I am furious that I was not there, in those splendid, tremendous days. I hope, however, to take part here in the action which is imminent. We of this corps want to rival our companions of the 3rd at whatever cost. If our blood flows in torrents that will not daunt us. That man-eater, who has been too long honoured, must be destroyed. We solemnly swear, *maestro*, that we shall succeed. Before long I hope to be able to tell you about it. Our leader is Pecori Giraldi. You know him; he is a man of steel; we have perfect faith that he will conduct us to certain and complete victory, and that thus we shall not be second to our companions on the Isonzo.

"I do not say good-bye, *maestro*, but *arrivederci*."

The newspaper comment which follows the publication of this letter was as follows:—

"As long as the Italian army has soldiers who can think and write as does the author of this letter, there remains no doubt that our victory will be overwhelming. An army formed of elements like this undermines every barrier and plants the banner of liberty, of justice, and of civilisation on the peaks whose access has always seemed impassable."

. . . .

"SALONICA, 15 *August* 1916.

"MY DEAREST ONES,—At last I am here in this city which is quite beautiful and modern. The voyage was very good. A calm sea and no submarines. I wrote many post-cards, and yesterday when I arrived I telegraphed. Have you received it?

"I hope that now you are tranquil. We are encamped here under large, convenient tents, and I enjoy the view of all the gulf and of the city. Yesterday we passed through the streets of the city amid the acclamations of the allied troops.

"The civilians, the Greeks, did not cheer us . . . you understand, certain things annoy them.

"There are ten races of us here, and the weakest of all are the masters of the house—the Greeks.

"You can believe that it is very interesting. One conversation alone with the Russian neighbours is extraordinary. I can manage very well with the French, and some words with the English, but more than all we do with gestures. We all seem like dramatic actors! The Russians are great. Always happy. Think how far distant they are from home!

"The Serbians are thin, and black from the sun, some of them have white hair and moustaches, but all of them are full of force, all eager, and with brilliant eyes. To-day I ate in a tavern with five Serbian soldiers, none of them less than forty years of age. They are full of enthusiasm and gratitude for all this preparation of forces which the Allies have made to liberate their fatherland. They are impatient and they have an incredible amount of ardour. They make me, with my twenty-one years, ashamed. We drank to the redemption of their country. Then there joined us some French, English, and Russians, each trying to express himself with words of friendliness . . . five languages . . . what a pandemonium! It was like another world. In a corner, there were two Greek soldiers *mogi*, *mogi* (weak and limp). Certainly it is not dignity which abounds in Greece!

"My impressions of the city? I had read so much, and

heard so much of it, I had seen so many photographs that when I went into a small Turkish *café* (and there was the *narghileh*) it did not make the slightest impression on me. It seemed as though I had always been there.

"However, observing all this world close by is very interesting, notwithstanding. There would be plenty to paint here! The women, contrary to my expectations, are very ugly, and perhaps the beautiful ones they keep in the shade and under glass so that they will not be spoiled, for it is very hot here and there is plenty of dust and dirt. In the bazaar I have seen one or two rather pretty, but there are none like the little dressmakers of Florence. It is of no use: Italy is the first in everything, and it only needs that the Italians should travel about to be convinced that they are superior to others in many things. One would not then feel discontented with them. . . . Women? there is no comparison. . . . Ships? clean, swift, and new like those of the Italians there are none. Soldiers? Ready and prompt like ours you will not find, and here there is good opportunity for comparison. Here one sees that as to equipment we are not behind any others, as men we are of the strongest, as to material one of the best. (The Italian motor cars one sees together with the English.) . . . In fact, we have a right to be proud that we are Italians. And believe me that every one respects us, and we do not see smiles on the lips of strangers. The Italians have taken Sabotino—do not joke! Therefore we do not want to hear any more the term 'macaroni' given to us. These remarks appear small, envious, and boastful, but instead they are symptoms of profound and radical changes in the conception of strangers in regard to us. Our war, among its other effects, has had also this: to make us valued for that which we are; second to none, as says our

general. I am happy to have made this little trip into the Orient, because I have been able to prove to myself many things which I knew and imagined.

"Be tranquil now, the events are hastening on. The end of the conflict will not be far off. A little courage and a little patience more!"

. . . .

Carlo Cameroni, a captain of infantry, who was wounded in one of the encounters on the Carso, and who died a few days later in hospital, wrote with his own hand the following will:—

"ZONA DI GUERRA, *September* 25, 1916.

"From the trenches of Nova Vas (Oppacchiessella), the night of the sixth of September of the year of glory 1916.

"Italy, Italy, Italy!

"In thy holy name I desire to give myself when the sacrifice shall have consumed me. And joyful, I hold out my arms to this sacrifice, for I am exalted, I am intoxicated by the ineffable idealism of duty completed.

"Italy, my country, I have loved thee in humility from the depths of my heart, and it is sweet that in dying for thee I am giving thee proof of my love. There must be sacrifice to consecrate love, always; without that, love is vain, a low and useless thing.

"For the second time I mount the great steps of thy glorious altar, which seems to glow red from the blood of the holy victims, and over which float like incense the white clouds of the battle smoke; and I feel that my hour is come.

"And thus I dispose of what I shall leave behind, my mortal body. . . .

"At this supreme moment, to all my dearly beloved

relations and to my faithful friends, my last, profound farewell.

"So let it be. Long live Italy, imperishable and great! May her destiny be accomplished!"

. . . .

From an article by Alighieri Castelli in the *Tribuna* of September 20, 1916:—

"I heard this the other day. An officer, a young lawyer belonging to the Territorials, saw a soldier who was writing a long letter on some blue paper. There were four or five pages of writing. The officer being curious to know what the long letter could contain, asked permission to take the sheets in his hand and to read them. They proved to be to the soldier's mother and some of them ran like this:—

"'DEAR MOTHER,—I am still well and I am doing my duty as a good soldier, as thou hast begged me to do. Do not have any doubt about that; I shall always continue to do the same. My superiors, who have so much to do, have probably never noticed me; we are so many! But that is no matter; when I see thee again and can tell thee about everything, I can prove to thee that I have tried to be a good soldier. Keep up a good heart. Do not be anxious about me. Before everything one must serve one's country. All things pass away, and I shall yet return to be with thee. Dost thou remember when I had appendicitis? How distressed thou wert! I suffered, yet, thou knowest, the illness passed. Whatever may be my fate, rest assured, I repeat, that thy son will bear himself honourably as thou wouldst have him.'

"Said the general:—

"'The officer who so unexpectedly found this fine letter wanted me to read it, and I was astonished and touched by

it. I felt anxious to know this soldier and he was called to Headquarters. As soon as I saw him I realised that he was indeed a rare young man, a model of a soldier. In his honest, open face and in his brilliant eyes I could see, I could read, if one might so express it, all the sentiments of his noble letter.'

"It was proved that he had given such proofs of ability under arms that he deserved to be made a corporal, and he was therefore promoted and the first stripe was pinned at once on his arm by the officer. A brief leave was also given to him, long enough at least for him to express to his mother by word of mouth that which his heart felt.

"He returned from his leave radiant with happiness. Some days later a letter reached the general (who says that he never stood on ceremony with his brave soldiers but liked to have as direct contact with them as possible, and was always glad when they wrote to him). In the letter from this soldier he said that his mother was delighted, and that he was hoping to show on the first opportunity that he deserved the corporal's stripe and that he had so sworn to his mother.

"The general went on:—

"'I answered him in my own hand. Not a week passed, however, before a dispatch arrived with the announcement: "Corporal —— has fallen at the head of his squadron, struck by a ball in the face, as he led his men in a bayonet attack, crying '*Savoia!*'"'

"In his pocket was the letter from his general!"

The Extraordinary Adventures of a Midshipman and Three Sailors on the Adriatic

"On the night of the 16th October 1916 an Austrian submarine attempted to sink one of our troopships. This was, however, discovered by the torpedo boat acting as her escort, which resolutely attacked the enemy, sinking her together with the brave defender of the troopship, the latter eventually arriving unharmed at its port of destination."

The account goes on to give an extraordinary episode in which the principal actor was the midshipman Castrogiovanni, who made part of the crew of our torpedo boat.

"He" (says the paper) "immediately after the sinking of the torpedo boat found himself alone in the water, in the dark night, with the sea running high. Calling out loudly he succeeded in bringing near him three other survivors to whom with an extraordinary coolness he explained that it was necessary to save their strength as much as possible in order that they might keep themselves afloat until daylight. And so they did. The men tried hard, but the situation was a desperate one. The Albanian coast must be still many miles distant towards the east, where a line of greyish light announced that the dawn was near.

"Would these survivors see the day? It was indeed a grave moment: the wind and the sea were carrying them obstinately towards the north, towards the northern part of the Adriatic. They were being borne along by a contrary current. . . . A terrible hour passed.

"'Don't let your teeth chatter: save your strength!'

"'A little cold, lieutenant!'

"'Act. Do not think.'

"A little later a launch passed. They recognised it: it was the launch of their torpedo boat, but on board of it there were eighteen sailors of the Austrian submarine. They asked the four men in the water if they wanted to be taken on board. And then amongst those four men, exhausted by fatigue and cold, under the eyes of the enemy who offered rescue with imprisonment, there occurred a miracle. Their frozen veins felt a flush of rebellious blood. The paralysed nerves found strength, the almost weakened will grew resolute, and the discouraged heart became firm. The reply defied the enemy as well as death. Castrogiovanni felt the gaze of his companions on him, and lifting himself erect in the water, cried out firmly: 'No!' And he said to his companions:—

"'What do you others want to do? None of you will surrender?'

"'Not one.'

"One of them had even the sublime serenity to make a jest. He shouted: 'Reverse the engines!'

". . . They had refused the unexpected chance of safety and the launch left them. However, after six hours of unheard-of suffering, the four survivors were thrown up by a wave on the Albanian coast. By herculean efforts they succeeded in dragging themselves to shelter.

"And now occurred the strangest thing of all, and perfectly true though so strange. In climbing up on the rocks, the midshipman Castrogiovanni noticed that not far from them there lay an abandoned launch: it was the very launch of their own torpedo boat which had enabled the eighteen Austrians to save themselves. And so the young officer realised that the enemy had been con-

strained by the force of the sea to land at that point. He studied the position and recognised the coast belonging to the part of Albania already in the possession of the Italians. The sufferings endured, their exhausted strength, the seven hours of martyrdom, their wounds, all were as nothing in the light of a brilliant idea—to capture the Austrians!

"Probably they had landed several hours before the shipwrecked men. They must have had to go to some poor Albanian village to buy with money or to obtain by threats clothing of the country in which to disguise themselves. They would be about to slip away; it was necessary to act with haste.

"The midshipman sent two of his soldiers to the nearest sentry station to inform the commandant of what had happened, and with the other sailor dragged himself cautiously towards the interior. Suspicion proved certainty. The capture was organised like a manœuvre.

"By evening the lieutenant of the Austrian ship, the commander of the lost submarine, the sub-lieutenant and eleven sailors were taken prisoner by our patrols. The missing men had been beaten to death by the breakers in the struggle of leaving the launch and landing."

. . . .

This is a little story told by an old shepherd in the Val Sugana:—

"On the Pavione there was a great storm—hail, lightning, snow, so that it was impossible to stay out. An automobile arrived at the door of the shepherd's little house and stopped there. There was a villa near where it might have gone instead, a fine house, but the King wanted to stop at the humbler dwelling. The automobile

was put under the hay-mow. The King, with his general, entered the house and sat down in the kitchen to drink a cup of milk. The two little grandchildren of the shepherd were playing about, and the King called them and caressed them and gave to each one a gold piece.

"The old shepherd came down into the valley to find a jeweller who could attach the coins to an old gold chain which was a family treasure.

"'So,' said the old man, 'I made out of them two necklaces and two medallions for the two little creatures—for two little *redenti*—to whom they will be amulets, things to bring good luck.'"

. . . .

"*Fegataccio*" (which may be taken to mean a dauntless fellow) is the nickname of a Roman Bersagliere who was determined to redeem his past life by his service in the war. He reached his regiment, which was in the war zone, after he had escaped from the military prison at Leghorn, and presenting himself to the Captain, he said:—

"*Signor Capitano*, I have come to do some shooting. Either send me to the front or give me something to do, or I shall run away."

A patrol was about to be formed to go and destroy an Austrian observatory. He offered to take part in the expedition, but his prayer was refused, and he did not want to serve in any other way. On the 21st of October an enemy's ball struck him in the shoulder; before going to the field hospital he exclaimed:—

"They have wounded me, but we will revenge ourselves, horrible executioners!"

Returning to the front in Carnia and being

assigned to the machine-gun section, he soon became a leader and a person of importance. There was not a dangerous undertaking for which he did not offer himself. He baptised his machine-gun the "San Giorgio." In the Carnia another shot struck him. Recovered from this he immediately wanted to have his "San Giorgio" again. In another action on the Carso, in all the fury of a frightful engagement, he took a prisoner, and throwing his own mantle over the Austrian's head and turning to his companions, he shouted:—

"Oh, boys, whoever wants to see the prisoner must pay two *soldi*."

A sergeant of Modena in writing to his father says that "*Fegataccio*" in a recent action had gained the corporal's stripes, and had been proposed for the silver medal. Now he is determined to become a sergeant.—*November 9th*, 1916.

. . . .

A gentleman of the Lucchesia sends a copy of this letter which one of his peasants at the front writes to his wife:—

"My dear Wife,—

"1. All my passion is for thee.

"2. When I read thy words my heart seemed drowned by a wave of pain that I had not been able to help thee in thy need.

"3. But soon I was greatly cheered in hearing that thou art well as is also the case of thy dear husband.

"4. I have understood how on the morning of the sixth of the month my aunt heard that my Gemma was lamenting and ran to call my Mamma.

"5. And when my dear Mamma arrived, after a few moments was born my beautiful flower in the lap of my sweet wife.

"6. And when my *babbo* arrived the little sparrow chirped already, and my *babbo* heard it outside the door, and said,—Oh little fly, I am a grandfather.

"7. And now I am thinking how that little leech has attached itself to a sweet cherry and is taking in what it needs, warm and sweet, so that it may be fat like a fig-pecker when its dear *babbo* returns.

"8. Meanwhile thou must stay warm and comfortable in bed, here it is very cold, and the cannon never cease. It seems like a continual hurricane by day and by night.

"9. It is necessary to take Trent and Trieste because they have robbed us of them, but one hopes that the Madonna of the Guercioli will help us to take them soon and that all will not have to die.

"10. And that she will make me return to kiss my dear wife and our flower and my dear Mamma and my *babbo* and my brothers and cousins.

"11. And that the Madonna will make me return to look after the flowers in the garden of the Signora, whom salute for me.

"12. And I hope that Signorino Giorgio will return and if the priest is willing to wait he could be the godfather.

"13. And if that cannot be, patience for this time, it will be for the next, when thou shalt have a beautiful boy.

"14. All my love is for thee.—I am thy dear husband, GEPPE."

Italian Heroism

Commemorating two officers who fell during the fighting on the Carso, a general in command of a brigade of grenadiers pronounced the magnificent discourse from which the following extracts are taken:—

"The bodies of our two brothers in arms, who with the smiling eyes and ardent hearts of youth were here with us but a few days ago, now lie before us. With brotherly pity and faithfulness, the humble grenadiers were able to save them from the beating of the rain and the wind on the arid rocks of the Carso, to give them back, sooner or later, to the breast of their mourning mothers. But many others of the glorious dead lie as yet unburied, or covered lightly with a little earth, not always in the shadow of a cross nor marked by any name which will reward in after days the eager search of their mothers and wives. But wherever they rest, they are equally dear to our hearts—all these dead of our family. . . . In the present modest commemoration, we think of them all, symbolised by these two who lie here before us. . . . Like two heroes of old, greater and grander, in an adventure most difficult and terrible, they fell, struck down by the raging fury of the abhorred adversary's blows.

"'*E ben risorge e vince*
Chi per la Patria cade,
Ne la santa luce de l'armi.' . . ."

. . . .

"Up then on high, high in the sun let our banners flame, all the banners of Italy for which the generous blood of our

brothers is preparing new destinies. The spirits of our brave companions in arms are waiting to welcome the eager and expectant spirits of the new Italy.

"This is not a funeral. It is a betrothal. The souls of those who leave us now are uniting themselves with the guardian spirits of the past or those of the more recent days of our glorious Brigade. They point out to us and to those coming after us bearing our ensign, the path of duty and honour, and they are singing the immortal hymns of the *Patria*:—the *Patria*—the thought and the sentiment of which filled their hearts and souls: the *Patria*—the cry which breaks forth from every heart even in the midst of sighing and weeping, when one of these goes forth to join his companion spirits.

"They died because above and before all they loved Italy: they loved her as we ought to love her, inspiring us to give ourselves to her in passionate devotion; they loved her more than a land; they loved her as with the love for a living woman.

"Oh, it will not be long before the skies of Italy will be full of the glorious spirits who are ascending!

"Lift up your head, O Trento, from the circle of the Italian Alps; lift up your head, O Trieste, from the curve of the Adriatic shore. The glorious dead who have bathed every hill and rock with their generous blood point out the way which leads to you, and they command us to follow it until we come to you. Wait in faith; we are coming. We ourselves, or those who shall survive us, will know how to unite you with our great Mother. Rest assured of that.

"No, then, no tribute of tears to your ashes, oh best-beloved companions in arms. Let the mothers who have the right weep. Our eyes are dry. For many months

there has been burning in our veins a fierce fever for the country. Not tears, but a fiery purpose excites our souls, an irresistible passion of hatred flames in our hearts, and is nobly nourished every time that one of you closes his eyes forever.

"It is this strong desire to avenge you, oh brothers: it is this eternal hatred against the eternal barbarian, against him who maliciously wishes to bend, to humiliate, to abase the mind of the Italians; against whoever has persecuted and oppressed us in language, in customs, in memories, in traditions. We owe it to the Austrians to hate them, we must fight them, trample them under our feet until they are crushed. We must inveigh against them without pity as long as even one of them presses with his defiled feet one hand's-breadth of our sacred land. . . .

"No, this is a betrothal, not a funeral. On high with the banner of Italy!

"And when in that great day of the final victory the grenadiers who remain return to Rome, and the rejoicing and grateful city receives them and together with all the other remaining soldiers of Italy they shall ascend the altar of the *Patria*, you shall arise from your graves, oh lions of the new Italy, to see Rome yet again, Rome to whom you sacrificed the purest flower of your youth,—to see again finally united to the great Mother, the faithful to Rome,—Trieste who calls from her azure strand, Trento who waits under her bastions, beneath the steadfast gaze of Dante.

"Oh holy springtime harvest of the heroes, so often reaped, yet flowering still, farewell. Farewell, dear names. We remember you ever with tenderness, with fond thoughts, and sadness for our loss."

In Praise of the War Mule

I have spoken of the faithful brute companions of the war, and although they are unconscious heroes, yet it may not seem out of place to remember them together with their masters. As one of the correspondents has said:—

"When the war is ended, and all that is possible has been said in praise of the soldiers, the wisdom of the commanders, and the results of the battles . . . not neglecting the praise of the various engines of war—the cannon, the machine-gun, the torpedo, the submarine, and the motor car—something will be lacking still if we forget the most humble, patient, heroic, obedient, constant, obstinate, and useful assistant in the war—the mule, the good mule with the long shaggy ears and the gentle and resigned look in the eyes. . . .

"Who will recall thy sacrifices, thy silent endurance, oh good mule, faithful companion of the soldier in the interminable *corvées;* during the burning hours of the summer day, or in the gloomy winter nights, over treacherous paths, under the fire of artillery, and up terrifying steeps of unknown danger? . . .

"Thou shouldst be remembered deep in the heart of every good Italian, the familiar and beloved image of the animal of war. . . .

"I remember. Before my eyes still passes an interminable train of long, extended ears, of patient backs almost buried under an avalanche of boxes, of sacks, of machines. And this train was going along a road near the Isonzo. It was the hour of sunset. In the quiet and serene air the marching column stood out clear and black against

the sky. . . . Going along amidst these placid and safe animals were the soldiers, who concealed under the shadow of their helmets the tranquil smile of children. They were carrying to their brothers in the trenches the comforts of food and the ever-needed ammunition. Did they know, these animals, what the men knew? I think they did, so often did there appear to be perfect understanding between the intelligent file of animals and their resolute conductors. Great was the order, the silence, the composure in that column, moved by a great quiet and disciplined force towards the completion of a notable task.

"Unexpectedly the tranquil air was crossed by a kind of noisy whistle . . . which came nearer with dizzy swiftness. There was a second of suspense: then with a tremendous explosion the shell fell near the file of mules. I saw the yellow flame, the whirl of red smoke: a part of the column disappeared amongst the clouds of powder and stones raised by the explosion. I did not hear a cry, nor see disorder of any kind. The dust having cleared away the column, re-formed, resumed its march along the banks of the river. None of the mules left the line, and it was not necessary for the soldiers to urge them on, for the wise beasts continued in good order on their perilous journey. But on the road lay two victims, who, with their gentle, dying eyes, looked up towards the sky which was growing dim forever to them. . . . From their poor lacerated bodies flowed blood, all their blood, forming a great dark stain in the middle of the road. And so they died, patiently, as they had lived.

"A young soldier detached himself from the column, turned back, and approached the two dying mules. He regarded them a long time with deep sadness. Then he

stooped down, caressed the muzzle of one of the victims of the Austrian ferocity and murmured something.

"A farewell?

"Who knows! . . .

"I remember a grey November day, on the snowy slopes of the Pasubio, from which seemed to ascend towards the leaden sky all the sadness of the earth. But never did anything ever appear to me more heroic, more noble, or more strong than the mule who brought to these rugged summits the heavy machine-guns, and the complicated apparatus of the photo-electrical stations. He could go where no automobile would dare. They were useless and immovable in these serpentine roads, surrounded by masses of ice, like prisoners in the grasp of winter. The mules, passing their rivals of steel and iron, rendered useless by the cold, with a slow and secure step, seemed to regard them with eyes full of intelligence and it may be a little mockery.

"He triumphed, the mule, over the haughty machine, which many a time had confused him with its dust and its pestilential smoke, passing ahead of him with a victorious and ridiculing noise. But now it was the turn of the brave beast to pass ahead and his was the reward and the recognition. The mule could go towards the clouds, towards the brave soldiers who were up on the peaks, fighting for the Greater Italy: and it was his turn, his, and not that of the hated motor with its benzine, to bring help and assistance to those valorous ones lost among the clouds and ice. . . .

"They were following, as is usual, the outer margin of the path, below which fell away an immense abyss, whose bottom the eye could not reach. But see, a soldier, who holds a mule by the bridle, slips on the icy snow, and rolls beyond the path: in a moment more he will be in the abyss.

His clenched hand does not let go the leather strap which unites him to the mule. . . .

"And the mule, dragged by that violent pressure, tries to hold himself back, he plants his four hoofs, he trembles, and turns a piteous glance around. . . . No one heeds; he is the last of the column, and the others are already far ahead, behind the white veil of snow which falls thick and fast. . . . A last desperate resistance. . . . Then the mule also is precipitated down into the white-covered chasm. . . .

"Death united them at the bottom of the precipice, the soldier and his faithful companion.

"And the snow covered them with the same winding-sheet."—"YAMBO" in the *Nazione*.

1916—1917

"It is in us to conquer, for ourselves and for future generations, for our *Patria*, and for civilisation. We close the year with the determination to conquer, with the determination to deserve the victory.

"And with this hope we watch for the dawn of the new year.

"Let us remember our *Risorgimento*. Let us think of the long patience, the long suffering, the unconquerable endurance of those who gave us a *Patria*. Let us recall all the history of human progress, of human justice. . . . The years will pass; the records of mourning and of grief will pale; but the glory of our Italy will shine forth, and it will be of unspeakable satisfaction to recognise in our future the proofs of the faith of to-day, kept alive with all our strength, with all our spirit.

"The epilogue of the tragedy cannot be far distant.

Let us salute it to-day with rising courage, and with no thought of resignation to defeat, O companions of all our days, of all our anxieties and of all our hopes."—From the *Corriere della Sera, December* 31, 1916.

. . . .

"The bold soldiers of Italy, by their hard sacrifices during this long and difficult war, have given constant proof of their wonderful efficiency. The Italian people has followed them and accompanied them with heart and soul, secure in the victorious efforts towards the accomplishment of the destined result, firm in the belief in a more flourishing and greater national future. In full accord with the people, with a heart full of gratitude to the soldiers, brave always and everywhere, I thank them for their greetings and good wishes, and I reciprocate the same together with my most fervent prayers for them."—From a telegram sent by the King to General Cadorna, in answer to the New Year's greetings from the army on the 1st of January 1917.

. . . .

The lines of defence along the Isonzo form a veritable bulwark of which one peak after another must be taken. The one called by the Italians Monte Cucco has fallen, and the Vodice and Monte Santo are being violently attacked and any day the news may come that Italy has taken possession of them. It is the most important part of the Austrian defences which command the valley of the Isonzo and threaten the country below with their hidden batteries in the caverns and recesses of the mountain side.

Here are two or three characteristic little stories

of these latest days of fighting, as related by the correspondent whose name has appeared before in these pages:—

"'We are greatly enlarging our occupation of the Vodice.' This is the succinct definition of the slow, hard, and patient work which, under the fire of the enemy's artillery, our soldiers are carrying out on the side of the Vodice, and which, seen near by, appears absolutely prodigious. Yet another time all the versatility of our soldier is revealed, his adaptability to all sorts of work in war as well as those of peace, and one begins to think that it is not for nothing that he is descended from Roman legions, accustomed to destroy and reconstruct at the same time, to cast the seeds of civilisation into the same furrows through which the battle had raged. And the words of Caesar come to the mind, who held it unworthy the name of Roman to cross a river on bridges constructed by the enemy; whence he would cause a new one to be thrown across, even when it was not necessary.

"But it is not necessary to bring up the *Commentaries* in order to realise the continuation of blood, of traditions, of force which have come down through the centuries. . . .

"A soldier was going yesterday with his shovel towards the positions conquered on the Vodice; and one of his companions accosted him a little ironically:

"'Are you going to dig the ground?'

"'Yes,' he answered; 'we have already reaped; now it is necessary to dig and plant for another harvest.'

"There was a little episode, almost symbolic and at the same time of an ingenuous simplicity. The soldiers who have conquered the Vodice wanted to have the Italian tricolour wave from the peak. The little standard which

represented the sentiment of the army and of the nation was taken up by a group of infantry, who danced about it like babies. Then it was planted in the rocks. An officer saluted it, holding his right hand to the visor of his cap, as one salutes the flag of the regiment. But those good boys could not contain themselves; and lifting their caps in the air they shouted *Evviva!* embracing each other, while our cannon and those of the enemy seemed to participate in the festival, in perfect accord among themselves."

. . . .

"We go up by a footpath which leaves the skirts of the Quota Monari, and turns towards the valley of Palievo and up towards Kuk (Monte Cucco). One meets wounded soldiers who are coming down on foot, or are being transported on stretchers, according to the gravity of their condition. When the stretchers reach the plain, they are placed on ambulances which will carry them to the hospital. Some of them are seriously wounded, with their heads completely bandaged so that not even the eyes are visible, or with their bare shoulders crossed by the bandages of the first dressing. One has his arms and hands all red with blood; another has the entire body, except the face, bound between two great piles of gauze and cotton, almost like two cushions, and he cannot move. Nevertheless he is tranquil and resigned, with a very pallid face, and he looks about, occupying himself with the officers and the soldiers of the Medical Corps, without agitating himself or making any complaint or losing his patience. None of the wounded complain. They all appear to be proud and happy to have been able to offer their lives to the *Patria*, and to suffer for her.

"I ask one of the youngest: 'How did it happen? How dost thou feel?'

"'A cursed *ta-pum* passed through my breast; but I am fortunate; I might have died; instead I am here. I shall be saved, I hope; but . . . even if I die, what does it matter? When one goes to war, one must understand that. We are not learned . . . we are *contadini* . . . but we are Italians, and we, too, love Italy.'"

. . . .

"The rocky profile of the Vodice stands out against the sky, amidst the smoke of shells. They are fighting around the summit. Our men are a brief distance from it. I see our sentinel who with his gun on his arm cuts the horizon clearly. He is in profile, straight, immovable on one of the rocks. Down there, behind his shoulders in the woods, are the troops who have already made so many assaults and who are preparing to make others."—*May* 1917.

TO-DAY

Once more it is May in Italy and the 24th dawns, the second anniversary of the beginning of the war. We have been two years in this great conflict and the end is not yet, though hopes are high and the enemy is weakening.

There are sad hearts and lonely homes, and up and down the land the life and hope of many a loving mother and proud father is gone. There are widows and orphans who are left desolate, the hospitals are full of wounded, and there are thousands of soldiers' graves. Some of them on bare mountain slopes, some in flowery meadows where the fresh grass covers them, some of them in the little Campo Santo of the village, or in the great cemeteries near the cities. Still there is need for further sacrifice and self-denial and hard work, weary nights and exhausting days, and those of us at home as well as those who go out to meet the enemy's guns must all do our part.

Yet in spite of the sadness of it all and the infinite mourning, Italy is going on. This very day, while her people gather together to remember with tears and with rejoicing all the road through which she has travelled during these two years, the bells are ringing for a victory, and all the banners are out. The formidable defences of Monte Santo, Monte Cucco, the Vodice and the Hermada

are falling into the hands of the conquering armies. Those who know what these mountains are, how they are fortified and what almost impossible steeps must be ascended, what are the positions which must be secured, can understand the enormous difficulties in the way. Rocks and desolate peaks, swept by the *Bora*, the fierce wind from the mountains, hidden guns at every point, where caverns in the mountain side are filled by unseen foes armed with deadly means of offence, wire entanglements everywhere, and most of the fighting going forward almost straight uphill, and the Austrians at the top with all their fortifications. Neither in the Giulian Alps and along the coast, nor in the high mountains of the Trentino is the advance anything but supremely difficult, but the courage of the Italians is indomitable, the Italian arm is strong, and Italy is ready for the completion of her task which is to do her own part valiantly and so to help on by every means in her power the great and final victory of the Allies.

"Cheerfulness, patience, constancy, self-sacrifice, and heroism are the fundamental virtues of the Italian people under arms; virtues which have gained for us the respect of our enemies, the appreciation of the Allies, and the admiration of the whole world. With a strong soul and a heart secure Italy enters her third year of war, the year which will be that of victory."

The Living and the Dead

"Times of war, like that in which we have the fortune to live, force upon us a truer arrangement of things. In

the mild days of peace, evil and good disguise themselves, and are mixed and confused, but to-day instead they separate, they reveal themselves, they assail one another. Unheard-of horrors of inhuman cruelty give rise to marvellous deeds of heroism. Life and death are continually clasping hands,—one is confounded with the other: in them is comprehended all that is bestial, all that is divine in man; brutal lust, sublime renunciation; the fiercest hate, the warmest love. The instinct of preservation, the fury of destruction, search for and confront each other, they meet, they make peace. Death generates life, life generates death in an embrace which creates and destroys.

"The men who return from the front where they have been fighting to the ordinary every-day life experience feel an astonishment amounting almost to indignation when at first they take part again in our petty, daily affairs. They have been accustomed to matters which decide life and death, and these ordinary occupations seem to them but as idle and foolish diversions. . . .

"But we ourselves, anxious and far-away spectators, can we say truly where life is? With us here, or up there where death is ever present?

"Lafcadio Hearn narrates that he was once present when the remnant of the Japanese army, after their victory over the Chinese, returned from the war; and how as he watched these returning soldiers wounded and silent, their eyes still seeing the horrors through which they had passed, he had a vision of the full, cheerful ranks of those who had gone out, and he said to a Japanese who stood near him:

"'This evening they will be at home, and thinking of their comrades who will never more return.'

"His companion answered, 'Perhaps you people of the West think that the dead do not return. But we cannot

believe that. There is not a single one of them who does not come back, who does not know the way. From China and from Chosen, from the salt depths of the ocean they have all returned, all. And they are here with us, and they will present themselves when the Emperor shall call us for another war.'

"Well, but do not we of the Western world possibly believe now as do the Japanese? Are Christianity and Shintoism not agreed in that same faith of a resurrection, of the eternal, revivifying action of death? We too know that all our dead of Italy are risen again. We have sung hymns of this return; now we know that it is accomplished. All have come back; the poets who could read in the future the destiny of Italy, the thinkers who educated her sons for the hour in which they should throw themselves into the adventure; those who upheld the state, those who guided the armies, those who commanded, those who obeyed. The mothers who wept, embracing and blessing their sons, the sons who departed, singing—ALL, all those by whose virtue Italy arose, lived, and believed in every age, since the tribes on the Acropolis watched from their rocky shelter to drive out the invader, since the time when the brightly painted galleys ploughed the waters of the Mediterranean. The soldier of Trasimene who fought against Hannibal stands beside the Alpino who leaps from the trench on the slopes of the Carso. The fanfare of war has called them all into line. The great spirit of Italy lives in them and for them."—PIERO GIOCOSA, in the *Corriere della Sera*.

"Beautiful Italy! golden amber
  Warm with the kisses of lover and traitor!
Thou who hast drawn us on to remember,
  Draw us to hope now: let us be greater
By this new future than that old story.

. . . .

"Till truer glory replaces all glory,
  As the torch grows blind at the dawn of day;
And the nations rising up, their sorry
  And foolish sins shall put away,
As children their toys when the teacher enters.

. . . .

"Each Christian nation shall take upon her
  The law of the Christian man in vast:
The crown of the getter shall fall to the donor,
  And last shall be first while first shall be last,
And to love best shall still be to reign unsurpassed."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

"Si scopron le tombe, si levano i morti,
I martiri nostri son tutti risorti!
Le spade nel pugno, gli allori alle chiome
La fiamma ed il nome d'Italia nel cor!

Coro.

"Veniamo! Veniamo! Su, oh giovani schiere!
Su al vento per tutto le nostre bandiere!
Su tutti col ferro, su tutti col foco,
Su tutti col foco—d'Italia nel cor.
Va fuori d'Italia, va fuori ch'e l'ora,
Va fuori d'Italia, va fuori o stranier.

. . . .

"Le case d'Italia son fatte per noi,
E la sul Danubio la casa de tuoi:
Tu i campi ci guasti; tu il pane c'involi,
I nostri figliuoli—per noi si vogliam!
Va fuori d'Italia ecc.

. . . .

"Son l'Alpi e due mari d'Italia i confini
Col carro di fuoco rompiam gli Apennini;
Distrutto ogni segno di vecchia frontiera,
La nostra bandiera per tutto innalziam.
Va fuori d'Italia ecc.

. . . .

"E dietro la rossa vanguardia dei bravi
Si muovan d'Italia le tende e le navi:
Già ratto sull'orma del fido guerriero
L'ardente destriero—Vittorio sprono.
Va fuori d'Italia ecc.

"Per sempre è caduto degli empi l'orgoglio,
Il dir—Viva Italia va il Re in Campidoglio.
La Senne e il Tamigi saluta ed onore
L'antica signora che torna a regnar.
Va fuori d'Italia ecc.

. . . .

"Contenta nel regno fra l'isole e i monti
Soltanto ai tiranni minaccia le fronti:
Dovunque le genti percuota un tiranno
Suoi figli usciranno per terra e per mar.
Va fuori d'Italia! Va fuori ch'e l'ora;
Va fuori d'Italia, va fuori o stranier."

These verses of Garibaldi's hymn stirred the heart of Italy in the days of the earlier War of Independence, and they stir that great heart to-day.

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